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- Breakouts & Sleepers
- Impact Rookies
- Player Utilization
- Expert Mock Draft

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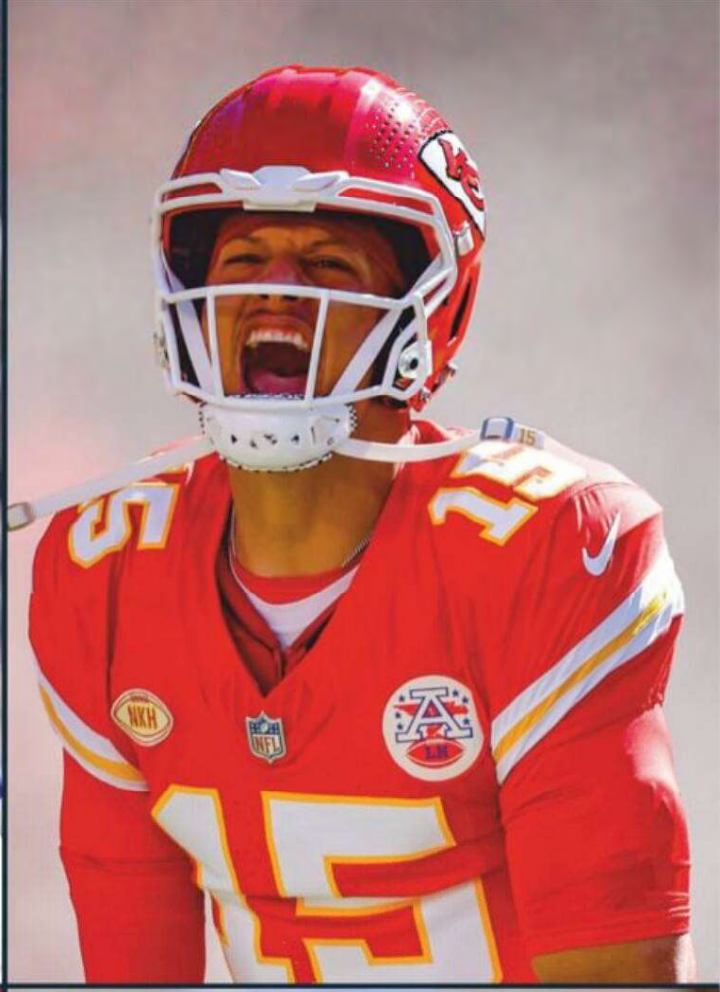

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The Only Way to Live

→ If you've read, watched, listened to or tolerated me for any amount of time, you know I hold these truths to be self-evident: Fantasy football is a hobby we do for fun, and since there's nothing more fun than winning, first and foremost we gotta do that. But managing a fantasy team shouldn't feel like homework, or that you need a degree in advanced mathematics plus Nate Silver's cell number to understand.

Fantasy advice needs to be smart, insightful, actionable and entertaining. It's what I've always tried to do — and it's certainly what I've built Fantasy Life on. This started as a daily, free newsletter (sign up for it at FantasyLife.com, he said promotingly), and I'll be damned but it turned out a bunch of people agreed with the approach. The newsletter turned into a site with a bunch of free, industry-leading tools (seriously, we won awards and everything), a national SiriusXM radio show, the Fantasy Life FAST channel on LG TV sets, and now this magazine. Along the way, analysts that I've read, watched and listened to for a long time — Matthew Freedman, Ian Hartitz, Dwain McFarland, Peter Overzet, Kendall Valenzula among them — joined the cause. The cause to help you win, no matter your league settings or size.

What you hold in your hot little hands here is chock full of highly researched advice using proprietary underlying data to not only give you insight, but to make managing your fantasy teams fun. We've done the work so you don't have to. And we're not done yet. By buying this magazine, you also get updates throughout the preseason at FantasyLife.com. Just scan the QR code on the back cover.

Thank you for trusting us. Thank you for supporting us. And thank you for coming along on the journey.

May your trades never get vetoed, your flex plays shine and your #Monday NightMiracles all come through.

MATTHEW BERRY

TOP 250 RANKINGS

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
1	Christian McCaffrey	RB	49ers	RB1
2	CeeDee Lamb	WR	Cowboys	WR1
3	Tyreek Hill	WR	Dolphins	WR2
4	Breece Hall	RB	Jets	RB2
5	Ja'Marr Chase	WR	Bengals	WR3
6	Bijan Robinson	RB	Falcons	RB3
7	Amon-Ra St. Brown	WR	Lions	WR4
8	Justin Jefferson	WR	Vikings	WR5
9	Puka Nacua	WR	Rams	WR6
10	Garrett Wilson	WR	Jets	WR7
11	A.J. Brown	WR	Eagles	WR8
12	Jonathan Taylor	RB	Colts	RB4
13	Jahmyr Gibbs	RB	Lions	RB5
14	Drake London	WR	Falcons	WR9
15	Marvin Harrison Jr.	WR	Cardinals	WR10
16	Saquon Barkley	RB	Eagles	RB6
17	Davante Adams	WR	Raiders	WR11
18	De'Von Achane	RB	Dolphins	RB7
19	Kyren Williams	RB	Rams	RB8
20	Chris Olave	WR	Saints	WR12
21	Deebo Samuel	WR	49ers	WR13
22	Brandon Aiyuk	WR	49ers	WR14
23	Stefon Diggs	WR	Texans	WR15
24	Josh Allen	QB	Bills	QB1
25	Mike Evans	WR	Buccaneers	WR16
26	D.J. Moore	WR	Bears	WR17
27	Sam LaPorta	TE	Lions	TE1
28	Jalen Hurts	QB	Eagles	QB2
29	Travis Kelce	TE	Chiefs	TE2
30	Josh Jacobs	RB	Packers	RB9
31	Jaylen Waddle	WR	Dolphins	WR18
32	Lamar Jackson	QB	Ravens	QB3
33	Travis Etienne Jr.	RB	Jaguars	RB10
34	Derrick Henry	RB	Ravens	RB11
35	Michael Pittman Jr.	WR	Colts	WR19
36	Nico Collins	WR	Texans	WR20
37	Patrick Mahomes	QB	Chiefs	QB4
38	Malik Nabers	WR	Giants	WR21
39	Cooper Kupp	WR	Rams	WR22
40	D.K. Metcalf	WR	Seahawks	WR23
41	C.J. Stroud	QB	Texans	QB5
42	Trey McBride	TE	Cardinals	TE3
43	Isiah Pacheco	RB	Chiefs	RB12
44	Rachaad White	RB	Buccaneers	RB13
45	Joe Mixon	RB	Texans	RB14
46	George Pickens	WR	Steelers	WR24
47	James Cook	RB	Bills	RB15
48	DeVonta Smith	WR	Eagles	WR25
49	Tank Dell	WR	Texans	WR26
50	Mark Andrews	TE	Ravens	TE4
51	Anthony Richardson	QB	Colts	QB6
52	Alvin Kamara	RB	Saints	RB16
53	Kenneth Walker III	RB	Seahawks	RB17
54	Zay Flowers	WR	Ravens	WR27
55	Tee Higgins	WR	Bengals	WR28
56	Joe Burrow	QB	Bengals	QB7
57	Amari Cooper	WR	Browns	WR29
58	Aaron Jones	RB	Vikings	RB18
59	Christian Kirk	WR	Jaguars	WR30
60	Dalton Kincaid	TE	Bills	TE5
61	James Conner	RB	Cardinals	RB19
62	Jayden Reed	WR	Packers	WR31
63	David Montgomery	RB	Lions	RB20
64	Keenan Allen	WR	Bears	WR32
65	Dak Prescott	QB	Cowboys	QB8
66	Rhamondre Stevenson	RB	Patriots	RB21
67	Terry McLaurin	WR	Commanders	WR33
68	Kyler Murray	QB	Cardinals	QB9
69	Marquise Brown	WR	Chiefs	WR34
70	Rashee Rice	WR	Chiefs	WR35
71	Zamir White	RB	Raiders	RB22
72	Xavier Worthy	WR	Chiefs	WR36
73	Kyle Pitts	TE	Falcons	TE6
74	Jordan Love	QB	Packers	QB10
75	George Kittle	TE	49ers	TE7
76	Rome Odunze	WR	Bears	WR37
77	D'Andre Swift	RB	Bears	RB23
78	Raheem Mostert	RB	Dolphins	RB24
79	Diontae Johnson	WR	Panthers	WR38
80	Tony Pollard	RB	Titans	RB25
81	DeAndre Hopkins	WR	Titans	WR39
82	Najee Harris	RB	Steelers	RB26
83	Jordan Addison	WR	Vikings	WR40
84	Brian Thomas Jr.	WR	Jaguars	WR41
85	Brock Purdy	QB	49ers	QB11
86	Calvin Ridley	WR	Titans	WR42
87	Jaylen Warren	RB	Steelers	RB27
88	Evan Engram	TE	Jaguars	TE8
89	Javonte Williams	RB	Broncos	RB28
90	Ladd McConkey	WR	Chargers	WR43
91	Jayden Daniels	QB	Commanders	QB12
92	Christian Watson	WR	Packers	WR44
93	Keon Coleman	WR	Bills	WR45
94	Tua Tagovailoa	QB	Dolphins	QB13
95	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	Seahawks	WR46
96	Chris Godwin	WR	Buccaneers	WR47
97	Tyler Lockett	WR	Seahawks	WR48
98	Jonathon Brooks	RB	Panthers	RB29
99	Ezekiel Elliott	RB	Cowboys	RB30
100	Caleb Williams	QB	Bears	QB14
101	Trey Benson	RB	Cardinals	RB31
102	Zack Moss	RB	Bengals	RB32
103	Jake Ferguson	TE	Cowboys	TE9
104	David Njoku	TE	Browns	TE10
105	Chase Brown	RB	Bengals	RB33
106	Devin Singletary	RB	Giants	RB34
107	Dallas Goedert	TE	Eagles	TE11
108	Brian Robinson Jr.	RB	Commanders	RB35
109	Curtis Samuel	WR	Bills	WR49
110	Brock Bowers	TE	Raiders	TE12
111	Austin Ekeler	RB	Commanders	RB36
112	Tyjae Spears	RB	Titans	RB37
113	Nick Chubb	RB	Browns	RB38
114	Trevor Lawrence	QB	Jaguars	QB15
115	Gus Edwards	RB	Chargers	RB39
116	Josh Palmer	WR	Chargers	WR50
117	Khalil Shakir	WR	Bills	WR51
118	Blake Corum	RB	Rams	RB40
119	Courtland Sutton	WR	Broncos	WR52
120	Jared Goff	QB	Lions	QB16
121	Mike Williams	WR	Jets	WR53
122	Dalton Schultz	TE	Texans	TE13
123	Kirk Cousins	QB	Falcons	QB17
124	T.J. Hockenson	TE	Vikings	TE14
125	Zach Charbonnet	RB	Seahawks	RB41
126	Jerome Ford	RB	Browns	RB42

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
127	Justin Herbert	QB	Chargers	QB18
128	Jakobi Meyers	WR	Raiders	WR54
129	Romeo Doubs	WR	Packers	WR55
130	Pat Freiermuth	TE	Steelers	TE15
131	Rashid Shaheed	WR	Saints	WR56
132	Brandin Cooks	WR	Cowboys	WR57
133	Aaron Rodgers	QB	Jets	QB19
134	Matthew Stafford	QB	Rams	QB20
135	Jameson Williams	WR	Lions	WR58
136	Cole Kmet	TE	Bears	TE16
137	Adonai Mitchell	WR	Colts	WR59
138	Adam Thielen	WR	Panthers	WR60
139	Jerry Jeudy	WR	Browns	WR61
140	Ja'Lynn Polk	WR	Patriots	WR62
141	Josh Downs	WR	Colts	WR63
142	Ray Davis	RB	Bills	RB43
143	Luke Musgrave	TE	Packers	TE17
144	Gabriel Davis	WR	Jaguars	WR64
145	Deshaun Watson	QB	Browns	QB21
146	Xavier Legette	WR	Panthers	WR65
147	Jermaine Burton	WR	Bengals	WR66
148	Malachi Corley	WR	Jets	WR67
149	Rico Dowdle	RB	Cowboys	RB44
150	Chuba Hubbard	RB	Panthers	RB45
151	Ty Chandler	RB	Vikings	RB46
152	J.K. Dobbins	RB	Chargers	RB47
153	Jahan Dotson	WR	Commanders	WR68
154	Tyler Allgeier	RB	Falcons	RB48
155	Darnell Mooney	WR	Falcons	WR69
156	Hunter Henry	TE	Patriots	TE18
157	Geno Smith	QB	Seahawks	QB22
158	Antonio Gibson	RB	Patriots	RB49
159	Kendre Miller	RB	Saints	RB50
160	Michael Wilson	WR	Cardinals	WR70
161	Roman Wilson	WR	Steelers	WR71
162	Baker Mayfield	QB	Buccaneers	QB23
163	Ricky Pearsall	WR	49ers	WR72
164	Dontayvion Wicks	WR	Packers	WR73
165	Troy Franklin	WR	Broncos	WR74
166	Marvin Mims Jr.	WR	Broncos	WR75
167	Justin Fields	QB	Steelers	QB24
168	Quentin Johnston	WR	Chargers	WR76
169	Demario Douglas	WR	Patriots	WR77
170	Wan'Dale Robinson	WR	Giants	WR78
171	Cade Otton	TE	Buccaneers	TE19
172	Rashod Bateman	WR	Ravens	WR79
173	Luke McCaffrey	WR	Commanders	WR80
174	Kimani Vidal	RB	Chargers	RB51
175	Will Levis	QB	Titans	QB25
176	J.J. McCarthy	QB	Vikings	QB26
177	Javon Baker	WR	Patriots	WR81
178	Tyler Conklin	TE	Jets	TE20
179	Tyrone Tracy Jr.	RB	Giants	RB52
180	MarShawn Lloyd	RB	Packers	RB53
181	Bucky Irving	RB	Buccaneers	RB54
182	Drake Maye	QB	Patriots	QB27
183	Jaylen Wright	RB	Dolphins	RB55
184	Roschon Johnson	RB	Bears	RB56
185	Khalil Herbert	RB	Bears	RB57
186	Demarcus Robinson	WR	Rams	WR82
187	Juwan Johnson	TE	Saints	TE21
188	Bryce Young	QB	Panthers	QB28
189	Jaleel Mclaughlin	RB	Broncos	RB58

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
190	Elijah Moore	WR	Browns	WR83
191	Elijah Mitchell	RB	49ers	RB59
192	Will Shipley	RB	Eagles	RB60
193	Jonnu Smith	TE	Dolphins	TE22
194	Chigoziem Okonkwo	TE	Titans	TE23
195	Ben Sinnott	TE	Commanders	TE24
196	Derek Carr	QB	Saints	QB29
197	Bo Nix	QB	Broncos	QB30
198	Treylon Burks	WR	Titans	WR84
199	Braelon Allen	RB	Jets	RB61
200	Michael Mayer	TE	Raiders	TE25
201	Daniel Jones	QB	Giants	QB31
202	Jalin Hyatt	WR	Giants	WR85
203	Kendrick Bourne	WR	Patriots	WR86
204	Greg Dortch	WR	Cardinals	WR87
205	Isaiah Likely	TE	Ravens	TE26
206	Russell Wilson	QB	Steelers	QB32
207	Rondale Moore	WR	Falcons	WR88
208	Kalif Raymond	WR	Lions	WR89
209	Keaton Mitchell	RB	Ravens	RB62
210	Isaac Guerendo	RB	49ers	RB63
211	Noah Fant	TE	Seahawks	TE27
212	Van Jefferson	WR	Steelers	WR90
213	Rasheen Ali	RB	Ravens	RB64
214	Dameon Pierce	RB	Texans	RB65
215	Gardner Minshew	QB	Raiders	QB33
216	Ja'Tavion Sanders	TE	Panthers	TE28
217	Jonathan Mingo	WR	Panthers	WR91
218	Dylan Laube	RB	Raiders	RB66
219	Greg Dulcich	TE	Broncos	TE29
220	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	RB	Chiefs	RB67
221	Samaje Perine	RB	Broncos	RB68
222	Miles Sanders	RB	Panthers	RB69
223	Malik Washington	WR	Dolphins	WR92
224	Devontez Walker	WR	Ravens	WR93
225	Jelani Woods	TE	Colts	TE30
226	Theo Johnson	TE	Giants	TE31
227	Justice Hill	RB	Ravens	RB70
228	Alexander Mattison	RB	Raiders	RB71
229	D'Onta Foreman	RB	Browns	RB72
230	Aidan O'Connell	QB	Raiders	QB34
231	Kyle Philips	WR	Titans	WR94
232	Josh Reynolds	WR	Broncos	WR95
233	Nelson Agholor	WR	Ravens	WR96
234	Darren Waller	TE	Giants	TE32
235	Zach Ertz	TE	Commanders	TE33
236	Mike Gesicki	TE	Bengals	TE34
237	Deuce Vaughn	RB	Cowboys	RB73
238	Evan Hull	RB	Colts	RB74
239	Kenneth Gainwell	RB	Eagles	RB75
240	A.J. Dillon	RB	Packers	RB76
241	Tucker Kraft	TE	Packers	TE35
242	Gerald Everett	TE	Bears	TE36
243	Tank Bigsby	RB	Jaguars	RB77
244	Jamaal Williams	RB	Saints	RB78
245	Michael Penix Jr.	QB	Falcons	QB35
246	Darius Slayton	WR	Giants	WR97
247	D'Ernest Johnson	RB	Jaguars	RB79
248	Jalen Tolbert	WR	Cowboys	WR98
249	Cordarrelle Patterson	RB	Steelers	RB80
250	Trey Palmer	WR	Buccaneers	WR99

→ Quarterback

RNK	PLAYER	TEAM
	TIER 1	
1	Josh Allen	BUF
2	Jalen Hurts	PHI
3	Lamar Jackson	BAL
	TIER 2	
4	Patrick Mahomes	KC
5	C.J. Stroud	TEX
6	Anthony Richardson	IND
7	Joe Burrow	CIN
	TIER 3	
8	Dak Prescott	DAL
9	Kyler Murray	CAR
10	Jordan Love	GB
11	Brock Purdy	SF
	TIER 4	
12	Jayden Daniels	WAS
13	Tua Tagovailoa	MIA
14	Caleb Williams	CHI
15	Trevor Lawrence	JAC
16	Jared Goff	DET
	TIER 5	
17	Kirk Cousins	ATL
18	Justin Herbert	LAC
19	Aaron Rodgers	NYJ
20	Matthew Stafford	LAR
21	Deshaun Watson	CLE
22	Geno Smith	SEA
	TIER 6	
23	Baker Mayfield	TB
24	Justin Fields	PIT
25	Will Levis	TEN
26	J.J. McCarthy	MIN
27	Drake Maye	NE
28	Bryce Young	CAR
29	Derek Carr	NO
30	Bo Nix	DEN
	TIER 7	
31	Daniel Jones	NYG
32	Russell Wilson	PIT
33	Gardner Minshew	LV
	TIER 8	
34	Aidan O'Connell	LV
35	Michael Penix Jr.	ATL
36	Jameis Winston	CLE
37	Drew Lock	NYG
38	Sam Howell	SEA
39	Joe Flacco	IND
40	Desmond Ridder	CAR

→ Running Back

RNK	PLAYER	TEAM
	TIER 1	
1	Christian McCaffrey	SF
2	Breece Hall	NYJ
	TIER 2	
3	Bijan Robinson	ATL
4	Jonathan Taylor	IND
5	Jahmyr Gibbs	DET
6	Saquon Barkley	PHI
	TIER 3	
7	De'Von Achane	MIA
8	Kyren Williams	LAR
9	Josh Jacobs	GB
10	Travis Etienne Jr.	JAC
11	Derrick Henry	BAL
	TIER 4	
12	Isiah Pacheco	KC
13	Rachaad White	TB
14	Joe Mixon	TEX
15	James Cook	BUF
16	Alvin Kamara	NO
17	Kenneth Walker III	SEA
18	Aaron Jones	MIN
19	James Conner	CAR
20	David Montgomery	DET
21	Rhamondre Stevenson	NE
22	Zamir White	LV
23	D'Andre Swift	CHI
24	Raheem Mostert	MIA
	TIER 5	
25	Tony Pollard	TEN
26	Najee Harris	PIT
27	Jaylen Warren	PIT
28	Javonte Williams	DEN
29	Jonathon Brooks	CAR
30	Ezekiel Elliott	DAL
31	Trey Benson	CAR
32	Zack Moss	CIN
33	Chase Brown	CIN
34	Devin Singletary	NYG
35	Brian Robinson Jr.	WAS
36	Austin Ekeler	WAS
37	Tyjae Spears	TEN
38	Nick Chubb	CLE
39	Gus Edwards	LAC
	TIER 6	
40	Blake Corum	LAR
41	Zach Charbonnet	SEA
42	Jerome Ford	CLE
43	Ray Davis	BUF
44	Rico Dowdle	DAL
45	Chuba Hubbard	CAR
46	Ty Chandler	MIN
47	J.K. Dobbins	LAC
48	Tyler Allgeier	ATL
49	Antonio Gibson	NE
50	Kendre Miller	NO
	TIER 7	
51	Kimani Vidal	LAC
52	Tyrone Tracy Jr.	NYG
53	MarShawn Lloyd	GB
54	Bucky Irving	TB
55	Jaylen Wright	MIA
56	Roschon Johnson	CHI
57	Khalil Herbert	CHI
58	Jaleel McLaughlin	DEN
59	Elijah Mitchell	SF
60	Will Shipley	PHI
61	Braelon Allen	NYJ
62	Keaton Mitchell	BAL
63	Isaac Guerendo	SF
64	Rasheen Ali	BAL
65	Dameon Pierce	TEX
	TIER 8	
66	Dylan Laube	LV
67	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	KC
68	Samaje Perine	DEN
69	Miles Sanders	CAR
70	Justice Hill	BAL
71	Alexander Mattison	LV
72	D'Onta Foreman	CLE
73	Deuce Vaughn	DAL
74	Evan Hull	IND
75	Kenneth Gainwell	PHI
76	A.J. Dillon	GB
77	Tank Bigsby	JAC
78	Jamaal Williams	NO
79	D'Ernest Johnson	JAC
80	Cordarrelle Patterson	PIT
81	Audric Estime	DEN
82	Israel Abanikanda	NYJ
83	Emari Demercado	CAR
84	Chase Edmonds	TB
85	Ameer Abdullah	LV

→ Wide Receiver

RNK	PLAYER	TEAM
	TIER 1	
1	CeeDee Lamb	DAL
2	Tyreek Hill	MIA
3	Ja'Marr Chase	CIN
4	Amon-Ra St. Brown	DET
5	Justin Jefferson	MIN
	TIER 2	
6	Puka Nacua	LAR
7	Garrett Wilson	NYJ
8	A.J. Brown	PHI
9	Drake London	ATL
10	Marvin Harrison Jr.	CAR
11	Davante Adams	LV
12	Chris Olave	NO
	TIER 3	
13	Deebo Samuel	SF
14	Brandon Aiyuk	SF
15	Stefon Diggs	TEX
16	Mike Evans	TB
17	D.J. Moore	CHI
18	Jaylen Waddle	MIA
19	Michael Pittman Jr.	IND
20	Nico Collins	TEX
21	Malik Nabers	NYG
22	Cooper Kupp	LAR
23	D.K. Metcalf	SEA
24	George Pickens	PIT
25	DeVonta Smith	PHI
26	Tank Dell	TEX
27	Zay Flowers	BAL
	TIER 4	
28	Tee Higgins	CIN
29	Amari Cooper	CLE
30	Christian Kirk	JAC
31	Jayden Reed	GB
32	Keenan Allen	CHI
33	Terry McLaurin	WAS
34	Marquise Brown	KC
35	Rashee Rice	KC
36	Xavier Worthy	KC
37	Rome Odunze	CHI
38	Diontae Johnson	CAR
39	DeAndre Hopkins	TEN
	TIER 5	
40	Jordan Addison	MIN
41	Brian Thomas Jr.	JAC
42	Calvin Ridley	TEN
43	Ladd McConkey	LAC
44	Christian Watson	GB
45	Keon Coleman	BUF
46	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	SEA
47	Chris Godwin	TB
48	Tyler Lockett	SEA
49	Curtis Samuel	BUF
50	Josh Palmer	LAC
51	Khalil Shakir	BUF
52	Courtland Sutton	DEN
53	Mike Williams	NYJ
54	Jakobi Meyers	LV
	TIER 6	
55	Romeo Doubs	GB
56	Rashid Shaheed	NO
57	Brandin Cooks	DAL
58	Jameson Williams	DET
59	Adonai Mitchell	IND
60	Adam Thielen	CAR
61	Jerry Jeudy	CLE
62	Ja'Lynn Polk	NE
63	Josh Downs	IND
64	Gabriel Davis	JAC
65	Xavier Legette	CAR
66	Jermaine Burton	CIN
67	Malachi Corley	NYJ
	TIER 7	
68	Jahan Dotson	WAS
69	Darnell Mooney	ATL
70	Michael Wilson	CAR
71	Roman Wilson	PIT
72	Ricky Pearsall	SF
73	Dontayvion Wicks	GB
74	Troy Franklin	DEN
75	Marvin Mims Jr.	DEN
76	Quentin Johnston	LAC
77	DeMario Douglas	NE
78	Wan'Dale Robinson	NYG
79	Rashod Bateman	BAL
80	Luke McCaffrey	WAS
81	Javon Baker	NE
82	Demarcus Robinson	LAR
83	Elijah Moore	CLE
84	Treylon Burks	TEN
85	Jalin Hyatt	NYG
86	Kendrick Bourne	NE
	TIER 8	
87	Greg Dortch	CAR
88	Rondale Moore	ATL
89	Kalif Raymond	DET
90	Van Jefferson	PIT
91	Jonathan Mingo	CAR
92	Malik Washington	MIA
93	Devontez Walker	BAL
94	Kyle Philips	TEN
95	Josh Reynolds	DEN
96	Nelson Agholor	BAL
97	Darius Slayton	NYG
98	Jalen Tolbert	DAL
99	Trey Palmer	TB
100	Jalen McMillan	TB

→ Tight End

RNK	PLAYER	TEAM
	TIER 1	
1	Sam LaPorta	DET
2	Travis Kelce	KC
3	Trey McBride	CAR
4	Mark Andrews	BAL
	TIER 2	
5	Dalton Kincaid	BUF
6	Kyle Pitts	ATL
7	George Kittle	SF
8	Evan Engram	JAC
	TIER 3	
9	Jake Ferguson	DAL
10	David Njoku	CLE
11	Dallas Goedert	PHI
	TIER 4	
12	Brock Bowers	LV
13	Dalton Schultz	TEX
14	T.J. Hockenson	MIN
15	Pat Freiermuth	PIT
	TIER 5	
16	Cole Kmet	CHI
17	Luke Musgrave	GB
18	Hunter Henry	NE
19	Cade Otton	TB
20	Tyler Conklin	NYJ
21	Juwan Johnson	NO
22	Jonnu Smith	MIA
23	Chigoziem Okonkwo	TEN
	TIER 6	
24	Ben Sinnott	WAS
25	Michael Mayer	LV
26	Isaiah Likely	BAL
27	Noah Fant	SEA
28	Ja'Tavion Sanders	CAR
29	Greg Dulcich	DEN
30	Jelani Woods	IND
31	Theo Johnson	NYG
32	Darren Waller	NYG
33	Zach Ertz	WAS
	TIER 7	
34	Mike Gesicki	CIN
35	Tucker Kraft	GB
36	Gerald Everett	CHI
37	Tommy Tremble	CAR
38	Dawson Knox	BUF
39	Davis Allen	LAR
40	Johnny Mundt	MIN
41	Hayden Hurst	LAC

QBs

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What can Kyler Murray do in the desert with a new WR1 to work with?

After collecting another ring, Patrick Mahomes is looking to get back in the MVP discussion

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NKH
NFL
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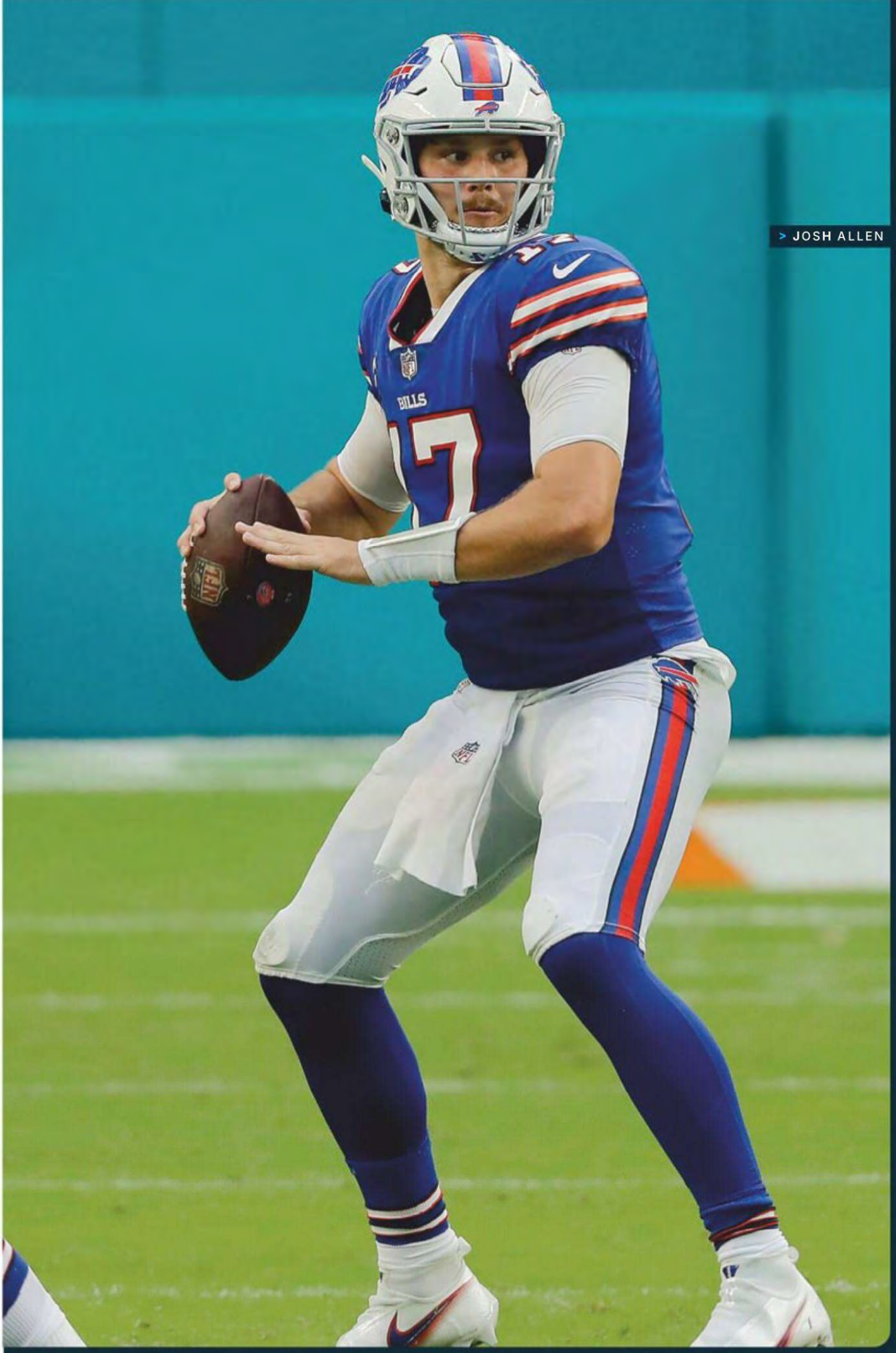
QB RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	PASS ATT	PASS COMP	PASS COMP%	PASS YARDS	PASS TDS	PASS INTS	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
1	Josh Allen	Bills	2023	17	579	385	66%	4307	29	18	112	519	15	412	24.2
			2024	16.5	561	370	66%	4067	29	15	111	575	8	367	22.2
2	Jalen Hurts	Eagles	2023	17	538	352	65%	3858	23	15	157	602	15	382	22.4
			2024	16.5	528	342	65%	3865	23	12	148	656	10	359	21.8
3	Lamar Jackson	Ravens	2023	16	457	307	67%	3678	24	7	148	821	5	348	21.8
			2024	16	480	315	66%	3662	25	10	151	858	5	353	22.1
4	Patrick Mahomes	Chiefs	2023	16	597	401	67%	4183	27	14	75	389	0	300	18.8
			2024	16.5	608	407	67%	4407	31	13	67	341	2	334	20.2
5	C.J. Stroud	Texans	2023	15	499	319	64%	4108	23	5	38	167	3	286	19.1
			2024	16.5	552	355	64%	4333	29	10	47	192	3	312	18.9
6	Anthony Richardson	Colts	2023	4	84	50	60%	577	3	1	25	136	4	72	17.9
			2024	16	498	311	62%	3514	20	9	105	633	5	308	19.3
7	Joe Burrow	Bengals	2023	10	365	244	67%	2309	15	6	31	88	0	155	15.5
			2024	16	574	386	67%	4250	29	11	55	188	3	309	19.3
8	Dak Prescott	Cowboys	2023	17	591	411	70%	4519	36	9	56	242	2	352	20.7
			2024	16.5	568	385	68%	4255	31	11	56	238	3	324	19.6
9	Kyler Murray	Cardinals	2023	8	268	176	66%	1800	10	5	44	244	3	149	18.7
			2024	15.5	512	341	67%	3633	22	10	89	465	5	297	19.1
10	Jordan Love	Packers	2023	17	579	372	64%	4158	32	11	49	252	4	333	19.6
			2024	16.5	551	354	64%	3961	28	11	48	228	3	300	18.2
11	Brock Purdy	49ers	2023	16	444	308	69%	4280	31	11	39	144	2	311	19.4
			2024	16.5	489	333	68%	4317	30	12	49	153	2	308	18.7
12	Jayden Daniels	Commanders	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16.5	513	323	63%	3334	20	10	122	734	5	307	18.6
13	Tua Tagovailoa	Dolphins	2023	17	561	389	69%	4679	29	14	35	74	0	297	17.4
			2024	16.5	546	369	68%	4369	28	13	37	104	1	292	17.7
14	Caleb Williams	Bears	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16.5	538	345	64%	3878	24	11	66	356	2	292	17.7
15	Trevor Lawrence	Jaguars	2023	16	564	370	66%	4017	21	14	69	339	4	289	18
			2024	16.5	576	372	65%	4089	21	13	67	319	3	287	17.4
16	Jared Goff	Lions	2023	17	605	407	67%	4574	30	12	31	21	2	305	17.9
			2024	16.5	563	372	66%	4148	26	11	29	72	1	275	16.7
17	Kirk Cousins	Falcons	2023	8	311	216	69%	2331	18	5	14	25	0	163	20.3
			2024	15.5	544	364	67%	4015	28	10	25	58	1	274	17.7
18	Justin Herbert	Chargers	2023	13	456	297	65%	3134	20	7	52	228	3	239	18.4
			2024	16.5	536	354	66%	3648	24	9	62	234	3	273	16.5
19	Aaron Rodgers	Jets	2023	1	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			2024	16	545	360	66%	3924	26	9	28	103	1	270	16.9
20	Matthew Stafford	Rams	2023	15	521	326	63%	3965	24	11	21	65	0	250	16.7
			2024	16	541	347	64%	4051	26	12	32	83	1	267	16.7



> JOSH ALLEN

QB RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	PASS ATT	PASS COMP	PASS COMP%	PASS YARDS	PASS TDS	PASS INTS	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
21	Deshaun Watson	Browns	2023	6	170	105	62%	1115	7	4	27	142	1	89	14.8
			2024	16	490	307	63%	3371	22	12	86	439	4	279	17.4
22	Geno Smith	Seahawks	2023	15	499	323	65%	3624	20	9	37	155	1	237	15.8
			2024	15.5	523	342	65%	3769	23	11	48	234	2	264	17.1
23	Baker Mayfield	Buccaneers	2023	17	566	364	64%	4045	28	10	62	163	1	286	16.8
			2024	16.5	532	337	63%	3714	24	12	54	168	2	261	15.8
24	Justin Fields	Steelers	2023	13	369	226	61%	2562	16	9	125	653	4	247	19
			2024	9	252	153	61%	1755	11	7	72	413	3	165	18.4
25	Will Levis	Titans	2023	9	255	149	58%	1808	8	4	25	57	1	112	12.4
			2024	16.5	542	326	60%	3787	21	13	55	173	2	256	15.5
26	J.J. McCarthy	Vikings	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16.5	540	341	63%	3621	21	11	58	305	2	262	15.9
27	Drake Maye	Patriots	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16.5	507	315	62%	3299	17	10	79	441	3	253	15.3
28	Bryce Young	Panthers	2023	16	527	315	60%	2877	11	10	39	253	0	174	10.9
			2024	16.5	549	344	63%	3516	21	11	45	253	1	245	14.9
29	Derek Carr	Saints	2023	17	548	375	68%	3878	25	8	32	40	0	251	14.8
			2024	16.5	551	366	66%	3949	24	10	38	96	1	260	15.7
30	Bo Nix	Broncos	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16.5	524	331	63%	3358	18	10	57	281	2	236	14.3
31	Daniel Jones	Giants	2023	6	160	108	68%	909	2	6	40	206	1	65	10.8
			2024	14	452	296	66%	2963	14	9	64	299	2	210	15
32	Russell Wilson	Steelers	2023	15	447	297	66%	3075	26	8	80	341	3	271	18.1
			2024	8	239	153	64%	1670	12	5	35	162	1	135	16.8
33	Gardner Minshew	Raiders	2023	16	490	305	62%	3305	15	9	34	100	3	211	13.2
			2024	10	324	204	63%	2257	12	6	26	91	1	149	14.9
34	Aidan O'Connell	Raiders	2023	11	343	213	62%	2218	12	7	17	11	1	137	12.4
			2024	7	233	147	63%	1556	9	5	17	39	1	103	14.7
35	Michael Penix Jr.	Falcons	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	1.5	51	32	62%	358	2	1	4	18	0	24	16
36	Jameis Winston	Browns	2023	4	47	25	53%	264	2	3	5	-6	0	15	3.7
			2024	1	32	20	61%	244	2	1	4	14	0	17	17.2
37	Drew Lock	Giants	2023	4	76	48	63%	543	3	3	5	14	0	32	8
			2024	3	98	61	62%	640	3	3	9	38	0	43	14.2
38	Sam Howell	Seahawks	2023	17	612	388	63%	3945	21	21	48	264	5	277	16.3
			2024	1.5	49	31	64%	328	2	2	5	23	0	24	15.7
39	Joe Flacco	Colts	2023	5	204	123	60%	1616	13	8	9	2	0	109	21.8
			2024	1	34	21	61%	232	2	1	2	3	0	15	15.2
40	Desmond Ridder	Cardinals	2023	15	388	249	64%	2836	12	12	53	193	5	199	13.2
			2024	1.5	49	31	64%	345	1	1	5	22	0	23	15

Quarterback Sleepers for 2024

Efficiency, aggressive tendencies and rushing upside are worth targeting with our last few picks

BY **CHRIS ALLEN**

> WILL LEVIS

If you think about it, there's an inherent incongruence with the term "QB sleeper."

We know who they all are. They're the faces of billion-dollar franchises. We see these players in commercials. One (briefly) flirted with a political career. They're household names.

Then we start drafting.

Once we're on the clock, rational thought takes a back seat to vibes. Stats, context and arbitrage value get thrown aside for who performed the best last year. Like actual GMs, we lean toward making publicly acceptable moves over franchise-altering decisions. But with a better process, we can identify the next set of QBs worth taking a swing on in 2024.

→ Process

I wanted to establish point thresholds for QBs, but how we value them differs from the other skill positions. With fewer viable signal-callers, we can't just use top 12 or top 24 like we do for RB1s or WR2s. So, for passers, I used the last five years of data to find reasonable breakpoints.

- Top 6: 354.0 total PPR points, 21.9 points per game
- Top 12: 292.5, 18.4
- Top 16: 248.6, 16.4
- Top 24: 208.7, 14.9

Jordan Love's 2023 season is our most recent diamond-in-the-rough performance. Certainly, drafting a QB with a high-end play-caller and a plethora of weapons makes sense now. But similar logic could have applied to selecting Bryce Young last year. Accordingly, hit rates for late-round signal-callers point to more of a "dart-throw" approach than a structured process.

- Top 6: 1.3%
- Top 12: 6.3%
- Top 16: 12.5%
- Top 24: 27.5%

Of course we'd like to find the next Brock Purdy or C.J. Stroud, but we also could wind up with Mac Jones. Luckily, there are some attributes we can look for as a guide.

→ Establishing Archetypes

There's no secret to targeting QBs with rushing upside. It's why we've pushed passers such as Lamar Jackson and Jalen Hurts to the front of drafts. But even the late-round superstars have highlighted the traits we want: above-average efficiency and aggressive throwing tendencies. And the data emphasizes these needs.

- EPA per dropback: 0.34 (r-squared)
- Air Yards per Attempt: 0.14
- Rushing Rate (scrambles + designed runs): 0.11
- Pressure-to-Sack Rate: 0.09

Overall, these attributes pass the sniff test. EPA depends not only on the QB (accuracy, ball placement), but also on the receiver (creating yards after the catch). It's why all but one triggerman to eclipse 300 PPR points from the later rounds had at least two receivers ranked in the top 30 in YPRR. Challenging the second level of the defense was also a commonality, with 83.3% averaging more than 8.0 air yards per attempt. Being able to move around (and past) the pocket becomes a luxury we can't always project in the final rounds. Instead, focusing on unexpected efficiency can lead us to undervalued passing games worth targeting with our last few picks.

Even the late-round superstars have highlighted the traits we want: efficiency and aggressive throwing tendencies

→ Aaron Rodgers
New York Jets

Admittedly, the name Aaron Rodgers and the word "sleeper" don't belong in the same sentence. In fact, they're opposites; even people outside of football know Rodgers. In some alternate universe, he's our vice president. But I find it objectively funny that fantasy managers are drafting Kirk Cousins ahead of Rodgers.

You know, the guy who also tore his Achilles tendon ... nearly two months after Rodgers.

Sure, the vibes might be better in ATL, and the Jets' offense was ranked toward the bottom in almost every efficiency metric. But in terms of opportunity, we might be sleeping on Gang Green.

- Plays per game (after Week 4): 34.3 (10th)
- Pass Rate Over Expectation: -0.8% (12th)
- Average Time of Possession: 30:09 (15th)

The Week 4 cutoff looks arbitrary, but after their narrow loss to the Chiefs, Breece Hall averaged more than 50% of the snaps for the rest of the season. Regardless, New York fielded five starters under center throughout the season and still threw the ball and ran plays at a top-12 rate.

Plus, their defense — a top-five unit by defensive EPA per play — kept the ball in their possession for more than half of most games. If you stripped the names and historical angst surrounding the team away, you could see the optimism.

The Jets have made some gambles in free agency regarding who will protect or catch passes from Rodgers, but there's no doubt the roster is in a better spot than it was in '22. And with the future Hall of Famer at the helm, the pass-game volume will have more of an impact.

→ Will Levis
Tennessee Titans

Look at Levis' first game as a starter. He attempted only six passes (most of them in the short area of the field) before launching a deep strike to DeAndre Hopkins for a 47-yard score. The Titans couldn't keep him off the field after that. Injuries did, though.

Nevertheless, for an eight-game stretch, Levis provided enough evidence to warrant Tennessee building around him. The fantasy results weren't always there (just one top 12 finish), but his rankings in some key underlying metrics are worth a second look.

- **Air Yards per Attempt: 1st**
- **EPA per dropback (min. 175 dropbacks): 14th**

Levis had two main problems while navigating his rookie season: a porous O-line and weak supporting cast. The front office fixed the first problem. Cleveland's former offensive line guru, Bill Callahan, joined his son (head coach Brian Callahan) to revamp the Titans' trenches. Even though the Browns dealt with their woes up front, Tennessee QBs would have happily switched places:

- **Sack Rate Allowed: 6.7% for CLE, 11.5% for TEN**
- **Pressure Rate Allowed: 5.4%, 42.3%**
- **QB Hits Allowed: 47, 66**

Levis also has more options to target. Calvin Ridley joins Hopkins as the second perimeter WR, and RB Tony Pollard will complement Tyjae Spears. Ridley's 13.9 aDOT in Jacksonville tied his second-highest career mark while he served as the Jaguars' WR1. With more time to throw and more deep and intermediate pass-catchers (e.g. Treylon Burks, Chig Okonkwo), spike weeks from Levis won't be uncommon.

→ Geno Smith
Seatle Seahawks

Now here's where the terms QB and sleeper work in the same sentence. Not because we don't know who Mr. "They Wrote Me Off, I Ain't Write Back Tho" is. But fantasy managers are tired of him nonetheless — our eyes glaze over when seeing Smith's name.

But the Seahawks' coaching staff shuffle should put Smith back on our radar. New OC Ryan Grubb was the (partial) architect of the University of Washington's offensive success, and a few of the Huskies' passing game elements caught my eye. Washington's offense stressed the intermediate and deep parts of the field. Michael Penix Jr. had a 10.4-yard aDOT under Grubb, the second-highest mark in this year's QB class. Accordingly, Penix's 21.5% deep-ball rate ranked ninth in the FBS. Smith had top-10 grades on attempts of 20-plus yards in back-to-back seasons and sits right at the league average in air yards per attempt since taking over in Seattle (7.3). More aggression from Smith and creative play-calling combined with explosive pass-catchers such as D.K. Metcalf or Jaxon Smith-Njigba would be a welcome sight.

The Huskies used motion and 12 personnel to create mismatches in high-leverage situations. Smith's passing efficiency dropped to 24th in obvious passing scenarios because nobody was open. Meanwhile, Grubb's offense was converting third downs at the highest rate in the NCAA during Penix's first year. Under Grubb's guidance, Smith can ascend into the fringe top 12 ranks again.

> JAYDEN DANIELS

QB Carousel

Fantasy Life analysts break down QBs they're higher and lower on for 2024

BY MATTHEW FREEDMAN, DWAIN MCFARLAND & KENDALL VALENZUELA

Quarterback can be a tricky position in fantasy football. Generally ignored early in drafts, the position annually offers late-round options with a significant chance of outproducing their ADP. But identifying these profits is not an exact science. Those who leaned on the likes of Daniel Jones, Aaron Rodgers or Matthew Stafford last season did not reap the full benefit of loading up on skill positions early. Of course, those who left the draft room with Joe Burrow, Justin Herbert or Justin Fields didn't exactly enjoy life with their early-round picks, either.

So what do we make of the QB position for 2024 fantasy football? Rather than doing the exact opposite of what didn't work out for us last year, let's look to Fantasy Life analysts Matthew Freedman, Ian Hartitz and Kendall Valenzuela for insight.

Q: Which QB are you higher on than the market and why?

→ Jayden Daniels Washington Commanders

Early drafters are overlooking Daniels' potential, taking him as the QB18. If he remains injury-free, he could easily secure a top 10 position in 2024. Over his collegiate career, he posted a 14% scramble rate and averaged 17% of the designed rush-

ing attempts — both great signs for future rushing production. Particularly impressive were his final two seasons at LSU, in which Daniels maintained an enticing average of 90 yards per game.

Daniels didn't mature into a prolific passer until his fifth year but arrived in a big way when he averaged 318 yards and 3.3 TDs at LSU. The late breakout is a concern, but it also demonstrates his potential in the passing game. The Fantasy Life projection model assumes Daniels will struggle in year one as a passer, forecasting fewer than 3,400 yards and 20 TDs. However, the model loves his upside on the ground, suggesting he could push for 700-plus yards on 120 or so totes.

Since 2011, we have had 21 instances of a QB recording 100 or more rushing attempts while passing for fewer than 3,500 yards. That group averaged 20.3 fantasy points per game and finished with an average of QB8 in points per game. Only three failed to secure a top 12 finish.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Jordan Love
Green Bay Packers

Despite entering his fifth season in the NFL, Love has just 20 starts to his name (including playoffs); there's room for improvement over 2023, when he passed for 4,159 yards and 32 TDs, and added 4 rushing TDs.

Additionally, all of his pass catchers (WRs Christian Watson, Jayden Reed, Romeo Doubs, Dontayvion Wicks and Bo Melton and TEs Luke Musgrave and Tucker Kraft) are still on cheap contracts and in the ascension phase of their careers. Love and his receivers have the opportunity to advance together.

Finally, Love has one of the league's best and most consistent offensive schemers and play-callers in HC Matt LaFleur, whose unit was No. 4 last year in expected points added per play (0.091). If Love underperforms his draft position this year, he's unlikely to do so by much, but if he outperforms he could finish the season as a top-three fantasy producer.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN

→ Kyler Murray
Arizona Cardinals

Last season, I dubbed Murray as a potentially valuable late pick in drafts, hoping his return from ACL surgery would come mid-season and push us into fantasy championships. Unfortunately, his Week 10 return and beyond didn't yield the high expectations I had hoped for. But it did show a glimpse of what could be in 2024.

Murray had three weeks with top 10 fantasy finishes last season and now will be a full year removed from his injury and even more comfortable with head coach Jonathan Gannon and offensive coordinator Drew Petzing's offense. To add even more fuel to the fire, the arrival of WR Marvin Harrison Jr. should open up this offense even more. He will join the team as the undisputed No. 1 receiver and has the ability to elevate Murray. Last season, one of Murray's favorite targets was rookie tight end Trey McBride, who finished with 81 receptions on 106 targets for 825 yards.

I'm beyond optimistic about Murray this season. Not only do I think he will return to the top of his game, but the team assembled by Monti Ossenfort and Co. will help propel him to top fantasy finishes.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

Q: Which QB are you lower on than the market (i.e. a Do Not Draft Player) and why?

→ Justin Herbert
Los Angeles Chargers

While Jim Harbaugh's winning ways might be a boon for the Chargers, his arrival could spell trouble for Justin Herbert's fantasy value. The last time Harbaugh was in the NFL was with the 49ers from 2011 to 2014. That team had a run-heavy approach, dropping back to pass on only 54% of plays, well below the NFL average of 61%. The offensive coordinator for those teams was Greg Roman — who now reunites with Harbaugh in the same role.

One might be inclined to think this is different because Herbert is a better passer than Alex Smith and Colin Kaepernick. While that's fair, we have seen Harbaugh yank the emergency brake with an elite passer before. He pounded the rock

61% of plays in two seasons at Stanford with Andrew Luck.

Furthermore, the Chargers' offseason moves align with historical play-calling tendencies. While salary cap was a factor, we can't ignore that the team jettisoned Keenan Allen, Mike Williams, Austin Ekeler and Gerald Everett. Then they opted to pass on Malik Nabers to take Joe Alt with pick five in the NFL Draft.

Herbert projects as a bottom 10 QB in the Fantasy Life projection model, making him a name to avoid unless his price falls significantly.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Joe Burrow
Cincinnati Bengals

Burrow will likely be fine in 2024, but his fantasy ceiling could be capped by a few factors.

He has never been much of a scrambler, and he might run even less this year after dealing with injuries (calf, wrist) most of last season. It would be a surprise if he approached the career-high five TDs rushing he had in 2022.

The offense has experienced notable turnover this offseason, and WR Jermaine Burton, TEs Mike Gesicki and Erick All, RB Zack Moss and OTs Trent Brown and Amarius Mims — all new to the offense — might not integrate as smoothly into the system as the team expects.

And then there's HC Zac Taylor, who lost his top lieutenant (former OC Brian Callahan) this offseason and whose play-calling prowess has often left something to be desired Burrow's floor is solid because of his inherent talent and his connection with WRs Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins, but his odds of having an elite fantasy season are diminished.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN

→ Tua Tagovailoa
Miami Dolphins

I know none of us are rushing to add Tua Tagovailoa to our fantasy teams, but with his QB13 ADP, I wanted to reestablish why other quarterbacks going around his range offer better upside.

Tagovailoa avoided injury in 2023, and fading a quarterback who has a top receiving duo in Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle seems questionable. But for a fantasy quarterback to be truly successful, there needs to be high-end mobility and the opportunity to notch touchdowns week in and week out.

The Dolphins found the end zone on the ground 27 times last season, and while Tagovailoa threw for 29 with an incredible deep ball and accuracy, the rushing upside is limited. His 4,624 passing yards and 8.3 yards per attempt were impressive, but he averaged only 16.7 fantasy points.

I think it's also important to point out that Tagovailoa's strongest fantasy weeks came at the hands of mediocre teams: the Chargers (QB1), Broncos (QB2), Panthers (QB3), Patriots (QB9) and Commanders (QB10). When facing challenging teams, Tagovailoa had just a QB15 finish at best.

I'm drafting Miami's receivers and running backs but avoiding their quarterback in 2024.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

Q: What is your bold prediction for the QB position in 2024?

→ Kyler Murray
Arizona Cardinals

Bold predictions are all about natural resources. Which players have the right mix of untapped potential below the surface that could result in an eruption?

At the QB position, rushing upside is the resource that can make fantasy box scores boom. However, it's a rare trait that most don't have — especially when narrowing your search to QBs with 4,000-yard passing upside. However, one player stands out when surveying the QB landscape after the top six names: Kyler Murray.

Murray's injury history is a concern, but he won't go inside the top 12 QBs in many leagues. Despite the injuries, Murray has provided a high floor per game: He has never finished outside of the top 12 since entering the league. He also has a demonstrated ceiling. The former No. 1 NFL Draft pick finished as the QB3 with 24.9 points per game in 2020, with 822 rushing yards and 3,971 passing. Murray followed that up with 22.1 points per contest in 2021.

Now he's more than a season removed from a 2022 ACL injury, and the Cardinals added Marvin Harrison Jr. in the draft.

> ANTHONY RICHARDSON

With Harrison joining budding superstar TE Trey McBride, Murray could push for 3,800 yards passing and 550 yards rushing. Since 2011, QBs who have reached those milestones have averaged 23.5 fantasy points with a QB2 finish. Murray is the best QB value on the board and will challenge for a top three finish.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Jayden Daniels Washington Commanders

I have no idea if Daniels will be a good QB in reality. But for fantasy, he has what we want: The ability to produce with his legs (135–1,134–10 rushing last year) and the willingness to throw the ball deep (11.7 yards per attempt).

So here's my bold prediction: Daniels will finish as a top five fantasy QB as a rookie.

His receiving weapons aren't great (WRs Terry McLaurin, Jahan Dotson and Luke McCaffrey, TEs Zach Ertz and Ben Sinnott and RB Austin Ekeler), but they're good enough for Daniels to be respectable as a passer. With his rushing ability, OC Kliff Kingsbury is likely to give him at least a few designed carries each game. The rookie should have an elevated scramble rate as he looks to run when pressured.

Cam Newton (25.9 points per game) and Robert Griffin III (23.5) both started right away and finished No. 4 in fantasy scoring as rookies. Daniels' skill set is similar to theirs, and I believe he'll have comparable success.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN

→ Anthony Richardson Indianapolis Colts

The return of Anthony Richardson will bring a return to fantasy success. All right, in fairness, "return" is really referring to two games, but you get the point.

We saw flashes last year of just how good Richardson can be — he started just four games and completed two but notched top four fantasy finishes twice and averaged 23.1 fantasy points per game. And of course how could we forget the rushing upside? In the four games, he had 25 rush attempts for 136 yards and four touchdowns.

Yes, the injuries are a concern. A season-ending shoulder surgery is less than ideal for a QB who was tagged as an "undeveloped passer," and his injuries raised the question as to whether coaches would change his style to protect him. However, Richardson told reporters after the season he won't change his playing style, focusing more on understanding when to slide or go out of bounds going forward.

I love Richardson's potential and I also love his surrounding cast. The receiver trio of Michael Pittman Jr., Josh Downs and Adonai Mitchell will help him develop, as will head coach Shane Steichen, who did wonders with the team even under tough circumstances in 2023. The rushing upside will return immediately and he will evolve as a passer to be a top fantasy quarterback this season.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

> AARON RODGERS

QB Injury Report

Health issues to monitor among signal-callers heading into the 2024 NFL season

BY IAN HARTITZ

> SAD BUT TRUE: You can't score fantasy points without being on the field first.

While we can't necessarily control for future injuries, we can do our best to evaluate existing issues to determine the overall fantasy impact. And by "we," I mean actual doctors who are kind enough to offer fantasy-specific expertise, such as:

- Edwin Porras DPT (@FBInjuryDoc)
- Jeff Mueller PT, DPT (@jmthrivept)
- Jesse Morse MD (@drjessemorse)
- Deepak Chona MD (@SportMDAnalysis)

Here are four key QB injuries to be concerned with ahead of the 2024 fantasy season.

→ Falcons QB Kirk Cousins (right Achilles) and Jets QB Aaron Rodgers (left Achilles)

Don't underestimate the difference here: Cousins' recovery from a *right* Achilles tear could prove to be more challenging than Rodgers' *left* Achilles tear, as the back (right) leg is where right-handed QBs draw their power from while throwing.

Instead of following Rodgers' path, Cousins — who turns 36 in August — could be looking at a recovery more similar to that of Dan Marino, who noted, "It was a very tedious rehab. It didn't actually heal all the way, so I had to deal with not being able to get up on my toe for the rest of my career."

Of course, Marino threw for 4,453 yards and 30 TDs just one season removed from tearing his Achilles, and it'd make sense if modern medicine 30 years (!) in the future is a bit superior to what players were working with in the 1990s.

Still, it'd make a lot of sense if Cousins has to work much harder than Rodgers to get his usual throwing power back. It's good news that he's already throwing again, but multiple doctors have stated a decrease in arm strength is possible even while admitting that a Week 1 return is realistic.

Let's face it: Cousins' high-end efficiency in 2023 wasn't exactly the norm for the veteran signal-caller since he arrived in Minnesota.

- 2018: -0.012 EPA/dropback (No. 29 among qualified QBs)
- 2019: +0.199 (No. 7)
- 2020: +0.188 (No. 10)
- 2021: +0.137 (No. 10)
- 2022: +0.058 (No. 19)
- 2023: +0.145 (No. 6)

Then there's Rodgers, who turned 40 in December and also isn't guaranteed to be at his best come Week 1 of this season. That said, Rodgers was believed to have a realistic chance of participating (at far less than 100%) in January, and he'll be well within the usual Achilles rupture timetable of nine to 12 months by the time September rolls around.

BOTTOM LINE: Both Cousins and Rodgers should be ready to start by Week 1, but there's more concern about Cousins' return to full strength.

→ Giants QB Daniel Jones (knee)

A Week 1 return from his torn right ACL is "possible but not guaranteed," according to Dr. Chona. He adds that we should expect decreased rushing output in 2024. Any decrease in Jones' rushing production would be detrimental to his 2024 fantasy upside. The QBs with the most fantasy points per game from purely rushing production 2022 and '23 (min. 10 starts):

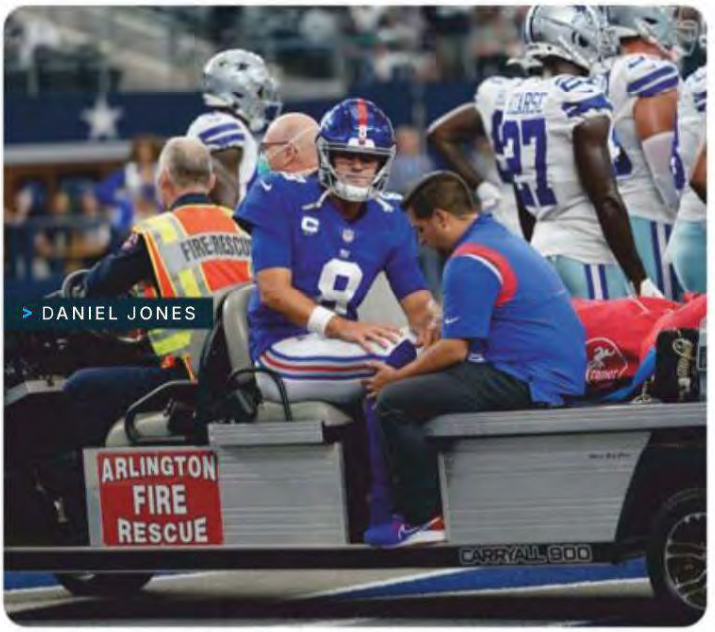
- 1. Jalen Hurts (9.5)
- 2. Justin Fields (9.0)
- 3. Josh Allen (7.9)
- 4. Lamar Jackson (7.4)
- 5. Jones (6.3)

Meanwhile, Jones ranks 39th among 42 QBs in fantasy points per game from purely passing production (10.1) during this span. Jones hasn't exactly been blessed with the world's most friendly offensive environment, but his bottom five marks in EPA per dropback (-0.211, 44th) and yards per attempt (5.7, 45th) were truly damning last season considering both Tyrod Taylor and Tommy DeVito posted superior efficiency numbers in the same offense.

BOTTOM LINE: Jones isn't likely to be 100% as a rusher by Week 1, hurting his chances of holding off a potential QB competition (Drew Lock).

The following four QBs saw their 2023 season end due to an injury that isn't expected to impact their 2024 performance:

- Bengals QB Joe Burrow (wrist): Data strongly favors a return to full range of motion and grip strength. Burrow is fully expected to be 100% by Week 1.
- Browns QB Deshaun Watson (shoulder): Dr. Chona doesn't expect any lingering impact, and Dr. Mueller believes Watson "should" be good to go for 2024.
- Colts QB Anthony Richardson (shoulder): Both Dr. Morse and Dr. Chona believe Richardson will be 100% for Week 1.
- Chargers QB Justin Herbert (finger): Expected to regain full strength well before training camp and isn't expected to have any lingering impact from the injury in 2024.



> DANIEL JONES

RBs

RUNNING BACKS

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<

For Year 2, Bijan Robinson goes to work with a new QB and coaching staff

>

Christian McCaffrey looks to deliver on his 1.1 fantasy status again in 2024

RB RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
1	Christian McCaffrey	49ers	2023	16	272	1459	14	79	67	564	7	362	22.6
			2024	15.5	245	1102	9	79	66	558	4	281	18.1
2	Breece Hall	Jets	2023	17	222	993	5	90	76	591	4	250	14.7
			2024	15.5	246	1082	7	76	63	474	3	249	16.1
3	Bijan Robinson	Falcons	2023	17	214	969	4	83	58	487	4	223	13.1
			2024	15.5	225	1012	7	80	64	512	4	248	16
4	Jonathan Taylor	Colts	2023	10	169	741	7	24	19	153	1	147	14.7
			2024	15.5	262	1149	9	43	33	244	1	217	14
5	Jahmyr Gibbs	Lions	2023	15	182	945	10	69	52	316	1	218	14.5
			2024	15.5	178	835	8	69	52	348	2	205	13.2
6	Saquon Barkley	Eagles	2023	14	247	962	6	58	41	280	4	205	14.6
			2024	15	245	1042	7	52	39	252	2	201	13.4
7	De'Von Achane	Dolphins	2023	11	102	804	8	37	28	193	3	180	16.3
			2024	15.5	156	781	7	58	45	319	3	196	12.6
8	Kyren Williams	Rams	2023	12	228	1144	12	47	32	206	3	241	20.1
			2024	15.5	220	963	8	51	38	277	2	201	13
9	Josh Jacobs	Packers	2023	13	233	805	6	52	37	296	0	165	12.7
			2024	15.5	237	1012	8	57	45	327	1	207	13.3
10	Travis Etienne Jr.	Jaguars	2023	17	267	1008	11	67	58	476	1	249	14.7
			2024	15.5	225	966	7	53	43	339	1	199	12.8
11	Derrick Henry	Ravens	2023	17	280	1167	12	31	28	214	0	224	13.2
			2024	15.5	247	1062	9	29	24	215	1	200	12.9
12	Isiah Pacheco	Chiefs	2023	14	205	935	7	50	44	244	2	194	13.9
			2024	15.5	211	917	7	58	48	356	2	201	13
13	Rachaad White	Buccaneers	2023	17	272	990	6	70	64	549	3	240	14.1
			2024	15.5	213	874	6	57	49	355	2	196	12.6
14	Joe Mixon	Texans	2023	17	257	1034	9	62	52	376	3	239	14.1
			2024	15.5	232	949	7	51	43	315	2	202	13.1
15	James Cook	Bills	2023	17	237	1122	2	53	44	446	4	215	12.6
			2024	15.5	184	820	5	55	40	356	3	183	11.8
16	Alvin Kamara	Saints	2023	13	180	694	5	86	75	466	1	190	14.6
			2024	15.5	161	679	4	74	60	458	2	180	11.6
17	Kenneth Walker III	Seahawks	2023	15	219	900	8	33	29	259	1	184	12.3
			2024	15.5	198	848	7	33	27	196	1	161	10.4
18	Aaron Jones	Vikings	2023	11	143	649	2	40	30	233	1	121	11
			2024	15	184	803	5	61	45	324	2	180	12
19	James Conner	Cardinals	2023	13	208	1039	7	31	27	165	2	188	14.5
			2024	14	184	791	6	36	31	228	2	166	11.9
20	David Montgomery	Lions	2023	14	219	1015	13	22	16	117	0	199	14.2
			2024	15.5	190	810	6	23	18	139	1	148	9.5

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
21	Rhamondre Stevenson	Patriots	2023	12	156	619	4	48	38	238	0	129	10.7
			2024	15.5	196	847	6	50	39	268	1	170	11
22	Zamir White	Raiders	2023	15	104	451	1	17	15	98	0	68	4.6
			2024	15.5	214	917	6	39	25	145	1	159	10.3
23	D'Andre Swift	Bears	2023	16	229	1049	5	47	39	214	1	182	11.4
			2024	15	170	736	5	43	33	229	2	154	10.3
24	Raheem Mostert	Dolphins	2023	15	209	1012	18	29	25	175	3	257	17.1
			2024	15	169	761	7	27	22	146	2	153	10.2
25	Tony Pollard	Titans	2023	17	252	1005	6	66	55	311	0	195	11.5
			2024	15.5	166	722	5	41	31	244	1	149	9.6
26	Najee Harris	Steelers	2023	17	255	1035	8	34	29	170	0	183	10.8
			2024	15.5	176	744	5	32	25	153	1	139	9
27	Jaylen Warren	Steelers	2023	17	149	784	4	72	61	370	0	170	10
			2024	15.5	137	603	4	61	49	334	2	151	9.8
28	Javonte Williams	Broncos	2023	16	217	774	3	55	47	228	2	154	9.6
			2024	15.5	184	782	5	46	37	219	1	156	10
29	Jonathon Brooks	Panthers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	12	139	595	4	31	24	166	1	115	9.6
30	Ezekiel Elliott	Cowboys	2023	17	184	643	3	61	51	313	2	151	8.9
			2024	15.5	189	775	6	45	36	226	1	161	10.4

> BREECE HALL

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
31	Trey Benson	Cardinals	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	118	504	4	14	10	72	0	85	5.5
32	Zack Moss	Bengals	2023	14	184	793	5	35	27	192	2	154	11
			2024	15.5	157	672	5	33	26	169	1	133	8.6
33	Chase Brown	Bengals	2023	11	44	179	0	15	14	156	1	47	4.2
			2024	15.5	140	593	4	37	32	237	1	131	8.4
34	Devin Singletary	Giants	2023	17	216	898	4	37	30	193	0	148	8.7
			2024	15.5	192	815	5	40	33	209	1	155	10
35	Brian Robinson Jr.	Commanders	2023	15	178	732	5	40	36	367	4	182	12.1
			2024	15.5	167	709	5	30	23	178	1	134	8.7
36	Austin Ekeler	Commanders	2023	14	179	632	5	69	51	436	1	168	12
			2024	15.5	130	556	5	50	37	283	2	141	9.1
37	Tyjae Spears	Titans	2023	17	100	452	2	67	52	385	1	128	7.5
			2024	15.5	147	637	4	41	31	225	1	133	8.6
38	Nick Chubb	Browns	2023	2	28	170	0	4	4	21	0	21	10.6
			2024	8	110	471	3	9	7	48	0	77	9.6
39	Gus Edwards	Chargers	2023	17	198	810	13	12	12	180	0	183	10.8
			2024	15.5	163	698	6	24	15	118	1	130	8.4
40	Blake Corum	Rams	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	112	480	3	15	11	75	0	84	5.4

> CHASE BROWN

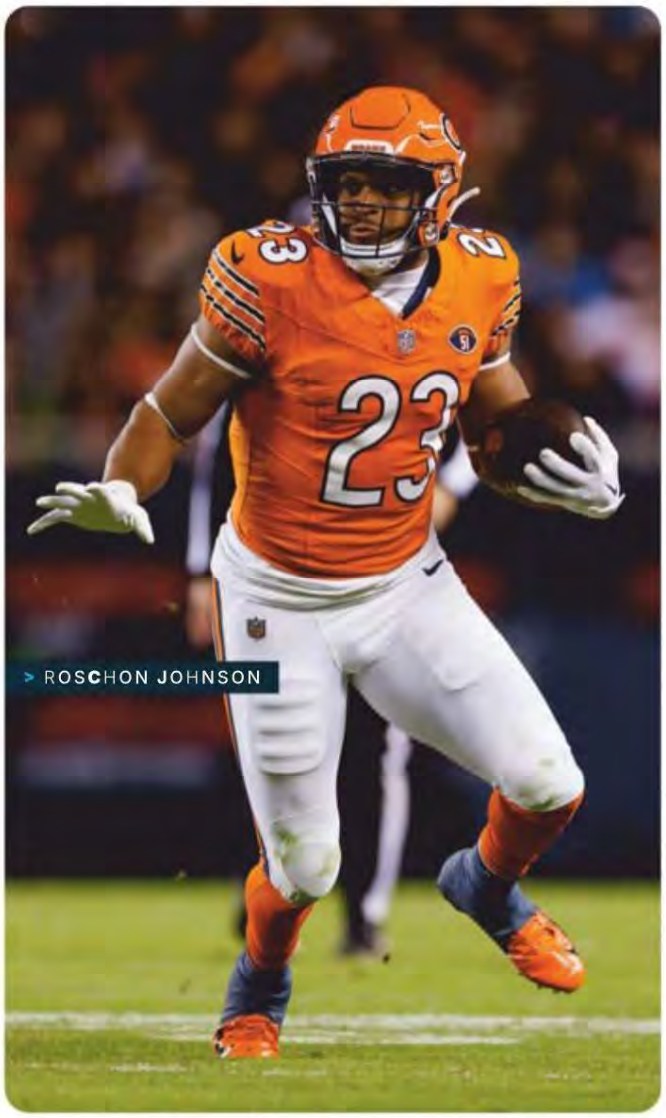
RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
41	Zach Charbonnet	Seahawks	2023	16	108	462	1	40	33	209	0	90	5.6
			2024	15.5	122	523	3	40	32	211	1	115	7.4
42	Jerome Ford	Browns	2023	17	204	813	4	60	44	319	5	189	11.1
			2024	15.5	168	713	5	47	34	251	2	151	9.8
43	Ray Davis	Bills	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	98	418	3	16	12	87	1	78	5
44	Rico Dowdle	Cowboys	2023	16	89	361	2	21	17	144	2	83	5.2
			2024	15.5	110	469	3	16	13	96	1	87	5.6
45	Chuba Hubbard	Panthers	2023	17	238	902	5	44	39	233	0	163	9.6
			2024	15.5	144	608	4	35	27	217	1	124	8
46	Ty Chandler	Vikings	2023	14	102	461	3	24	21	159	0	91	6.5
			2024	15.5	107	464	3	29	21	156	1	96	6.2
47	J.K. Dobbins	Chargers	2023	1	8	22	1	2	2	15	0	11	10.7
			2024	14	110	472	3	18	14	93	0	85	6
48	Tyler Allgeier	Falcons	2023	17	186	683	4	22	18	193	1	127	7.4
			2024	15.5	105	450	3	21	18	142	1	90	5.8
49	Antonio Gibson	Patriots	2023	16	65	265	1	57	48	389	2	107	6.7
			2024	15.5	103	438	3	37	29	211	1	104	6.7
50	Kendre Miller	Saints	2023	8	41	156	1	11	10	117	0	38	4.8
			2024	15.5	80	339	2	18	15	109	1	70	4.5
51	Kimani Vidal	Chargers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	73	313	2	13	10	70	0	58	3.7
52	Tyrone Tracy Jr.	Giants	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	96	410	3	23	18	119	1	83	5.4
53	MarShawn Lloyd	Packers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	67	285	2	13	10	68	0	54	3.5
54	Bucky Irving	Buccaneers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	81	346	2	10	8	54	0	60	3.9
55	Jaylen Wright	Dolphins	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	11	49	0	3	2	13	0	10	0.6
56	Roschon Johnson	Bears	2023	15	80	350	2	42	34	209	0	85	5.7
			2024	15.5	73	315	2	32	25	164	0	76	4.9
57	Khalil Herbert	Bears	2023	12	132	611	2	26	20	134	1	103	8.5
			2024	15.5	73	320	2	13	10	67	0	56	3.6
58	Jaleel McLaughlin	Broncos	2023	17	76	410	1	36	31	160	2	91	5.3
			2024	15.5	77	345	2	23	19	110	1	71	4.6
59	Elijah Mitchell	49ers	2023	11	75	281	2	8	6	14	0	45	4
			2024	15.5	79	339	2	9	8	43	1	59	3.8
60	Will Shipley	Eagles	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	29	122	1	8	6	44	0	27	1.8

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
61	Braelon Allen	Jets	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	42	181	1	6	5	36	0	33	2.2
62	Keaton Mitchell	Ravens	2023	7	47	396	2	10	9	93	0	65	9.3
			2024	7.5	14	70	0	6	5	35	0	16	2.1
63	Isaac Guerendo	49ers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	15	65	1	2	1	9	0	11	0.7
64	Rasheen Ali	Ravens	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	12	53	0	0	0	0	0	8	0.5
65	Dameon Pierce	Texans	2023	13	145	416	2	17	13	101	0	70	5.4
			2024	15.5	102	430	3	14	11	73	0	73	4.7
66	Dylan Laube	Raiders	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	15	64	0	17	14	101	0	28	1.8
67	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	Chiefs	2023	15	70	223	1	22	17	188	1	62	4.1
			2024	15.5	82	349	3	26	21	175	1	85	5.5
68	Samaje Perine	Broncos	2023	17	53	238	1	53	50	455	0	100	5.9
			2024	15.5	52	222	1	38	31	211	1	72	4.6
69	Miles Sanders	Panthers	2023	16	129	432	1	38	27	154	0	78	4.9
			2024	15.5	90	390	3	19	14	81	0	71	4.6
70	Justice Hill	Ravens	2023	16	84	387	3	37	28	206	1	97	6.1
			2024	15.5	66	288	2	30	25	155	1	72	4.6
71	Alexander Mattison	Raiders	2023	16	180	700	0	42	30	192	3	122	7.6
			2024	15.5	98	411	3	4	3	20	0	61	3.9
72	D'Onta Foreman	Browns	2023	9	109	425	4	15	11	77	1	86	9.5
			2024	15.5	90	386	3	10	7	55	0	65	4.2
73	Deuce Vaughn	Cowboys	2023	6	23	40	0	7	7	40	0	12	1.9
			2024	15.5	39	169	1	19	16	117	1	46	3
74	Evan Hull	Colts	2023	1	1	1	0	1	1	6	0	1	1.2
			2024	15.5	40	173	1	16	12	83	0	40	2.6
75	Kenneth Gainwell	Eagles	2023	16	84	364	2	36	30	183	0	82	5.1
			2024	15.5	37	158	1	18	14	102	0	43	2.8
76	A.J. Dillon	Packers	2023	15	178	613	2	27	22	223	0	107	7.1
			2024	15.5	37	157	1	8	6	49	0	30	2
77	Tank Bigsby	Jaguars	2023	16	50	132	2	4	1	6	0	26	1.6
			2024	15.5	36	147	1	3	2	14	0	24	1.5
78	Jamaal Williams	Saints	2023	13	106	306	1	19	18	62	0	52	4
			2024	15.5	54	226	2	13	10	58	0	46	2.9
79	D'Ernest Johnson	Jaguars	2023	17	41	108	0	11	10	140	0	30	1.8
			2024	15.5	47	204	1	19	15	119	0	50	3.2
80	Cordarrelle Patterson	Steelers	2023	14	50	180	0	11	9	38	1	32	2.3
			2024	15.5	20	84	1	12	9	65	1	28	1.8

Running Back Sleepers for 2024

How to identify cheap RBs with league-winning upside, plus three sleeper RBs for 2024

BY CHRIS ALLEN



> ROSCHON JOHNSON

Drafting sleeper RBs is a bit like playing Whac-A-Mole.

You try to hit on a player — in this metaphor, that's one of the moles above ground — but suddenly they're gone. An injury or a scheme change results in less playing time. So we move on to the next guy. Our mallet waits in anticipation so we can strike first and get more points.

But we picked the wrong spot.

A backup rusher we thought would be "the" guy ends up being only "some" guy. The team we wanted exposure to doesn't meet expectations. We've seen it happen before. Consequently, finding sleeper RBs feels more like an art than a science. However, using certain data, we can boost our chances of securing productive workloads from under-the-radar ball carriers.

→ Process

Classifying RBs can be challenging.

We've got multiple archetypes we can target, from short-yardage grinders to pass-catching backs. As a result, I used full seasons to maximize the number of game samples. Accordingly, after looking at the last five seasons, I set point-total thresholds for rushers:

- RB1: 274.4 total PPR points (17.7 PPR PPG)
- RB2: 198.4 (13.6)
- RB3: 155.9 (10.9)

Of course, we would all like our sleeper to be a top 12 asset. But for every Kyren Williams, there are about 10 Tank Bigsbys. The "more art than science" quip strikes again as the hit rates for late-round rushers aren't all that compelling from an analytical approach.

- RB1: 4.7%
- RB2: 7.8%
- RB3: 14.1%

For all the darts we've thrown at lesser-known ball carriers, only four have turned into RB1s in our five-year sample. Intuitively, and as the data suggests, our chances of finding valuable options increase as our expectations decrease. Regardless, there are a few commonalities between the players and their situations we can apply to our draft processes in 2024.

→ Establishing Archetypes

I'll use three names from the **2023** season to set the stage:

- **Jaylen Warren**: 188.4 PPR points
- **Gus Edwards**: 184.**2**
- **De'Von Achane**: 177.6

All three finished among the top **24**, but their routes to fantasy relevance couldn't have been more different. Regardless, their workloads typified what we want out of our RBs: either pass-catchers or plenty of involvement around the goal line. Stated another way, how teams used them matters. And some situations matter more for RB scoring than others:

- **Two-Minute Touches**: 0.**39** (r-squared)
- Targets: 0.**25**
- Inside the 10-**yard** Line: 0.**24**
- Early **Downs**: 0.14
- Obvious Passing **Downs**: 0.11
- Short-Yar**dage**: 0.09

When you think about it, the general hierarchy makes sense. Securing touches near the goal line, earning targets and having a multi-down role is more conducive to scoring fantasy points. Not coincidentally, teams had similar thoughts when designing offenses around our favorite runners.

Fourteen late-round runners have accrued more than 155 PPR points (RB**3** threshold) since **2**019. Coincidentally, they had multiple roles within their offense.

- Eleven averaged 54.9% of their team's early-down carries. Average target shares for the remaining three: 1**2**.5% (green zone), 1**3.2**% (two-minute), 9.5% (obvious passing downs)
- Only four had an average target share of less than 5.0%. Yet all four garnered more than 50% of the carries from inside the 10-yard line.
- Just three had route rates under 10% on third or fourth down.

Interestingly, the number of players that came from top 10 offenses was just five — in other words, investing in "backups on good offenses" isn't always the way to go. Finding players who won't leave the field in fantasy-friendly scenarios has been more effective. You may need to squint, but we've got options in **2024**.

→ Roschon Johnson
Chicago Bears

Despite logging only 561 scrimmage yards in his rookie season, Roschon Johnson ended **2023** on a high note, having wrested the RB1 job away from Khalil Herbert. The former Longhorn took 88% of the long-down-and-distance snaps while securing a 19% TPRR down the stretch. Combined with a 71% snap rate in two-minute situations, Johnson had evolved into a multi-down option.

The additions of Keenan Allen and Gerald Everett during free agency put our focus on Chicago's passing game. With **DJ** Moore already in place and Caleb Williams as the headliner, fantasy managers are clamoring for pieces of the Bears aerial attack. But new OC Shane Waldron's seemingly pass-friendly ways haven't always been prevalent when in scoring position in Seattle.

- **2023**: -6.6% red-zone pass rate over expectation
- **2022**: -1.0%
- **2021**: -0.**3**%

Sure, Chicago acquired D'Andre Swift. However, Swift doesn't have the luxury of running behind Philadelphia's offensive line. Plus, Johnson was the more efficient back in short-yardage situations, giving him a n edge in goal-line scenarios. He's like Kevin McCallister in *Home Alone*. With all of the happenings surrounding the Bears, we've forgotten Johnson is still in the house and capable of surprising us all in **2024**.

→ Ty Johnson
Buffalo Bills

Ty Johnson will wind up being James Cook's villain origin story.

Cook gets Day 2 draft capital, proves the Bills can safely jettison Devin Singletary and Zack Moss — although that doesn't look as savvy for Buffalo in hindsight — and prepares to enter the 2023 season as Josh Allen's lone RB.

But GM Brandon Beane adds Damien Harris and Latavius Murray to help out in short-yardage situations. Luckily, Harris and Murray are gone, but Cook's lack of skill at plowing through defenders remains. Of the 41 RBs with more than 20 attempts with three or fewer yards to go, Cook ranked:

- EPA per Rush: 23rd
- Forced Missed Tackle Rate: 23rd
- First Downs per Rush: 34th

Enter Ty Johnson. Admittedly, Johnson had fewer opportunities than Cook. Regardless, he outperformed Cook. Even worse for Cook, Johnson earned looks from Allen.

Simply put, Johnson has three-down potential. Buffalo's needs at premium positions will prevent them from significantly changing their backfield before Week 1. The RB2 spot is Johnson's job to lose. And given Cook's struggles in this area, we may see more of Johnson than we'd like at the start of the regular season.

→ Tyrone Tracy Jr.
New York Giants

Sliding a rookie such as Tracy Jr. into this category is tricky. Sure, rookies are unknowns so they fit the description of a sleeper, but their "unknownness" makes clicking them less enticing. However, the former Boilermaker has the physical profile of a back who can play right away. And he has the athleticism — he ran 4.48 40 at the Combine — to produce if given the chance. His collegiate profile also lends credence to this idea.

- Early-Down Carry Rate: 31.4% (2nd)
- Two-Minute Carry Rate: 38.4% (1st)
- Red-Zone Carry Rate: 38.0% (2nd)
- I5 Carry Rate: 47.4% (2nd)

Tracy Jr. forced a near-even split with fellow Purdue RB Devin Mockobee in 2023, and it was his first season playing the position, having moved there from WR. Even after switching positions, Tracy had a 19.4% TPRR.

Tracy Jr. has a clear path to a backup role in Year 1. He led Purdue in yards after contact per attempt (4.44), forced missed tackle rate (0.40) and caught 19 passes. If Devin Singletary falters, Tracy might be the next man up.

> ISIAH PACHECO

Talkin' Running Backs

Breakout picks, Do Not Draft options, impact rookies and bold 2024 predictions

BY IAN HARTITZ, DWAIN MCFARLAND & PETER OVERZET

This year's underwhelming running back draft class caused an unusual amount of reshuffling of running back rooms during NFL free agency. Couple the lack of incoming talent with an increasing number of RB committees and the RB fantasy landscape continues to be a difficult puzzle to solve.

Luckily, Fantasy Life's analysts can help clear up some of this murkiness. Here are three pressing questions answered by three of Fantasy Life's top RB aficionados, including their bold predictions for the position in 2024.

Q: Which RB are you higher on than the market and why?

→ Isiah Pacheco
Kansas City Chiefs

Pacheco made it through free agency and the NFL Draft without the addition of any significant competition. The biggest move the Chiefs made was bringing back Clyde Edwards-Helaire, who averaged a lowly 22% snap share last season. When you pair that with how Pacheco finished 2024, there are reasons for optimism.

Pacheco carved out a near-every-down role from Week 9 through the Super Bowl. Per the Fantasy Life Utilization Report, he accounted for 77% of the rushing attempts and upped his involvement in the passing game with 56% route

participation and 11% target share. He averaged a robust 17.4 fantasy points per contest, making him an RB1. The Chiefs are a pass-first offense (the offseason additions of Marquise Brown via free agency and Xavier Worthy in Round 1 of the NFL Draft point toward that trend continuing), which means there might not be much upside from the 17.7 totes per game Pacheco averaged down the stretch. But he resides in a high-quality offense, which boosts his TD upside.

Pacheco's closest comparables in our projection model averaged 15.4 points with an RB12 finish, based on a role similar to late 2023. In early drafts, Pacheco has gone outside the top 50 selections, making him a good target if you decide to wait at the position.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Joe Mixon
Houston Texans

Nobody is denying the reality that Mixon posted some truly underwhelming efficiency metrics last season, but here's the thing: So did a lot of RBs expected to go early in fantasy drafts. Mixon's average of 4.0 yards per carry ranked 28th ... 0.1 ahead of Saquon Barkley. His rate of forcing 0.12 missed tackles per carry was tied for the third-worst mark in the NFL ... with Alvin Kamara and Josh Jacobs.

Things like elite volume and a high-scoring offensive environment can help make up for a mediocre real-life RB. Mixon should enjoy both in 2024.

Volume: Mixon finds himself as the Texans' clear-cut No. 1 RB. Consider this: Mixon's three-year, $27 million extension with the Texans actually contains more guaranteed money ($13 million) than Josh Jacobs got from the Packers ($12.5 million).

Offensive environment: The NFL's 13th-ranked scoring offense is ascending under stud second-year QB C.J. Stroud; the additions of Mixon and (especially) Stefon Diggs make this group even more lethal and the easy pick for breakout group of the year.

Mixon is a probable Round 4 pick despite likely seeing similar touch counts and scoring opportunities as RBs going inside the first two rounds.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Jaylen Wright
Miami Dolphins

The most common reaction to Wright will be disinterest from fantasy gamers, but I promise you this is a mistake. On the surface Wright appears blocked on the depth chart behind De'Von Achane and Raheem Mostert, but that involves a lot of assumptions.

It assumes Wright is the worst of the three RBs — I'm not so sure. He has elite athleticism (4.38 40-yard dash and a 11-foot-2 broad jump) and the size to carry a nice workload (5 foot 10, 210 pounds). It also assumes that both Achane and Mostert will stay healthy, but both backs missed time last year. And it assumes that Mike McDaniel, who continues to stockpile speedsters, does not know how to utilize his playmakers. On that one, I'm very much not in agreement.

There is chaos at the RB position every year and Miami's run-game scheme is one of the best in the league. Instead of trying to guess how those RB points will be split, simply take stabs on all the Dolphins' backs when given the opportunity. The fact that Wright is the cheapest of them all is the cherry on top.

— PETER OVERZET

Q: Which RB are you lower on than the market (i.e. a Do Not Draft Player) and why?

→ Nick Chubb
Cleveland Browns

I love this guy. However, he's coming off a gruesome left knee injury that required multiple surgeries to repair his ACL, MCL and meniscus, and he's 28. Also, that's the same knee that required surgery on his PCL, MCL and LCL in college.

Recent injuries to J.K. Dobbins and Javonte Williams — who were younger — are the closest comparisons we have for the multifaceted nature of Chubb's injury. Dobbins tried to return to the field early in 2022 before shutting things down from Weeks 7 to 14. Upon his return, he was a low-end RB2, averaging 13.6 points per game.

Williams returned in Week 1 of 2023 and slowly ramped up to an RB1 workload over seven games. However, his forced

missed tackle rate dipped from 0.31 to 0.16, and his yards after contact fell from 3.4 to 2.7. Ultimately, the Broncos returned to a committee by Week 15, and Williams finished the season averaging 11.2 points, making him an RB3.

The chances that Chubb misses significant time or is a lesser version of himself are substantial, making it hard to envision a scenario in which passing on him costs us a fantasy championship. He is an "avoid" for me in 2024.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Tony Pollard
Tennessee Titans

The falloff in 2023 was a rough one. Pollard posted top three marks in virtually every advanced RB metric ... then below-average numbers across the board once he finally was given the full-time starting job. The trademark big-play ability was basically gone: Ezekiel Elliott (20.25 mph) actually posted a higher top speed as a ball carrier than Pollard (20.0) last season.

Many have pointed to the idea that Pollard improved down the stretch once he felt he was back to full health following 2022's season-ending fractured fibula. That simply wasn't the case, as his marks in yards per carry (4.0 vs. 5.2), yards after contact per carry (3.0 vs. 3.8) and explosive run play rate (9% vs. 16%) during his final nine games of 2023 were still shells of what he managed the previous year.

Now, Pollard enters a new offense with PFF's 32nd-ranked O-line and young, explosive competition in the form of second-year back Tyjae Spears. The Titans ranked 27th in scoring last season and the Cowboys ranked ... first. Pollard needs to regain vintage form in order to make up for this catastrophic downgrade in offensive environment — and that's simply not a bet I plan on making more drafts than not.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Kyren Williams
Los Angeles Rams

Williams was one of the biggest surprises in 2023. Unfortunately, he's now one of the shakiest picks you can make in the first few rounds of your draft.

The entire selling point for Williams is volume. HC Sean McVay employed him as a true workhorse back last season after getting rid of Cam Akers. His voluminous RB usage was rivaled only by Christian McCaffrey. At one point last season, McVay admitted in a press conference that they needed to take work off Kyren's plate. The issue, though, was the Rams didn't have another back the coaches could trust, so Williams remained the bellcow back.

That's no longer the case after the team spent a premium Round 3 pick on Blake Corum, who has a similar do-it-all skill set. The range of outcomes is wide here. Kyren could certainly hold off Corum and relegate him to handcuff status, or Corum could force a committee.

Kyren's price in drafts isn't properly accounting for the committee risk and the new threat to his volume. He was a great story in 2023, but you are better off letting someone else burn a pick on him in 2024.

— PETER OVERZET

Q: What is your bold prediction for the RB position in 2024?

→ Waiting on RB is the winning formula for 2024

The idea of waiting on RBs in fantasy drafts has become increasingly popular over the last few years. While the early results of zero-RB drafting were mixed, many people are doing it now, creating *huge* discounts at the position. That means more fantasy leagues than ever will be won by taking WRs early in drafts and circling back to RBs.

Historically, taking older or inefficient RBs based on a weak depth chart has been a mistake in the early rounds. However, in the modern age of WR-heavy draft rooms, those archetypes are getting pushed down to Rounds 5 through 7. Based on early best-ball data, here are some RBs going in that range:

- × Round 5: Rachaad White, Isaiah Pacheco, Joe Mixon
- × Round 6: Alvin Kamara, Aaron Jones, David Montgomery
- × Round 7: James Conner, Raheem Mostert, Zamir White

On the flip side, this also means WRs are going earlier than ever; if you wait, you may get boxed out at the position — especially

> TREY BENSON

in point-per-reception formats with three starters.

While you might not be excited about your RB1, you will still get to add upside options in the following rounds. When older backs break down as the season progresses, younger backs get their chance.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ The "RB Dead Zone" pulls an Undertaker in 2024

The "RB Dead Zone" hasn't necessarily been a bullet-proof philosophy, and there will always be an exception or two, but the gist is that the lack of true workhorse RBs in modern fantasy football makes it unwise to chase the position after the truly elite backs are already off the board. But what if this strategy has swung too far? What if there are actually multiple middle-round RBs who profile as every-down RBs in good-to-great offenses?

There are no fewer than five RBs with this archetype tentatively expected to be available in Rounds 4-7 this year:

- × Bucs RB Rachaad White
- × Texans RB Joe Mixon
- × Chiefs RB Isiah Pacheco
- × Vikings RB Aaron Jones
- × Bears RB D'Andre Swift

Each of these RBs either has an incumbent workhorse role or was seemingly paid to do just that. They have all proven capable of racking up fantasy points through the air and will be in offenses that at a minimum aren't expected to suck. This isn't to suggest you should necessarily take four RBs in a row in the middle rounds of the draft, but I'm happy to lock down at least one of these undervalued anchors when I've focused more on pass-catchers early.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Rookie RBs will surprise

The consensus opinion from both NFL evaluators and fantasy analysts is that this is a disappointing crop of rookie RBs. And at first blush, it's hard to disagree. There's no Bijan Robinson- or Jahmyr Gibbs-level talents. But two factors have me incredibly excited about what this crop of rookies can do for our fantasy teams in 2024.

First, there were tons of sneaky good landing spots (despite the Cowboys punting the position) in the draft. Jonathon Brooks (Carolina) and Trey Benson (Arizona) will take over their respective backfields by the season's end (and I already gushed about the Dolphins' Jaylen Wright on Page **37**).

Bucky Irving (Bucs) and Ray Davis (Bills) will square off against incumbent backs who have warts on their profiles. Rachaad White (Bucs) is not a good rusher, and James Cook (Bills) is explosive but prone to costly mistakes. Deep sleepers such as Tyrone Tracy Jr. (Giants) and Kimani Vidal (Chargers) could easily climb their depth charts.

The second selling point on these rookies is their price. Because we don't have elite prospects, most of them will go in the double-digit rounds of drafts. Year after year, rookie Zero RB targets emerge from the late rounds. I don't expect this year to be any different.

— PETER OVERZET

> NICK CHUBB

RB Injury Report

Health issues to monitor among fantasy-relevant backs as the season approaches

BY IAN HARTITZ

> SAD BUT TRUE: You can't score fantasy points without being on the field.

While we can't necessarily control for future injuries, we can do our best to evaluate existing issues to determine the overall fantasy impact. And by "we," I mean actual doctors who are kind enough to offer fantasy-specific expertise, such as:

- Edwin Porras **D**PT (@FBInjury**D**oc)
- Jeff Mueller PT, **D**PT (@jmthrivept)
- Jesse Morse M**D** (@drjessemorse)
- **D**eepak Chona M**D** (@SportM**D**Analysis)

Here are four key RB injuries to be concerned with ahead of the 2024 fantasy season.

→ Browns RB Nick Chubb (left knee)

Chubb's multi-ligament injury (MCL and ACL, plus meniscus) has required two separate surgeries and places him in uncharted territory.

While there is some hope for a full recovery by Week 1, this injury could be an issue for Chubb in the long-term even if he does manage to get back to looking like 90% of his usual baller self in 2024.

Of course, 90% of Nick Chubb is still pretty good. Just realize this could be problematic to his fantasy upside considering the Browns haven't exactly handed him the world's most fantasy-friendly workload over the years:

- 2022: RB1**8** in expected PPR points per game, RB**8** in real PPR points per game
- 2021: RB20 expected, RB12 real
- 2020: RB2**8** expected, RB9 real

It's good news that the Browns restructured Chubb's deal considering the early-offseason potential for him to be a cap casualty, but it's also fair to wonder if we've seen the best of the 28-year-old talent at this point.

BOTTOM LINE: This looks far more aligned with the "Javonte Williams" level of concern than the "Breece Hall" level from last season. Expect severely reduced efficiency even if Chubb manages to avoid starting the season on the PUP list.

→ Panthers RB Jonathon Brooks (right knee)

The consensus incoming rookie RB1 had surgery to repair his torn right ACL back in early December. Using a basic nine- to 11-month recovery timeline would lead to a glass-half-full return in September. Or it could be stretched to November if things don't go according to plan.

Good news, though: Dr. Dan Cooper projects Brooks to be cleared by training camp, and NFL.com's Mike Garafolo and Ian Rapoport report that the incoming rookie is expected to be ready for Week 1.

Of course, this 7.5-month timeline seems awfully optimistic. Being "ready" to participate in August is very different from ramping up toward a full workload in Week 1.

Bottom line: Brooks is far from guaranteed to be 100% by the time September rolls around. This doesn't make him a must-fade option — don't hate the player, hate the ADP — but at a minimum, early-season expectations should be kept in check.

→ Chargers RB J.K. Dobbins (left Achilles)

Dobbins could very well be on track to return in Week 1, but a decrease in performance is expected. Note that Dobbins also suffered a brutal multi-ligament knee injury in August 2021.

The recent history of RBs coming back from Achilles injuries simply hasn't been good:

- × Tarik Cohen: Hasn't returned to football.
- × James Robinson: Has been on five different teams over the last 12 months, never managing to earn a role along the way.
- × Justice Hill: One of the better case studies, Hill has averaged 4.9 yards per carry in two seasons since the injury and continues to offer upside as a pass-catcher.
- × Cam Akers: Ranks 39th and 40th in yards and yards after contact per carry among 49 qualified RBs in two seasons since returning.
- × Marlon Mack: Has bounced around four different teams over the past two years since parting ways with the Colts, failing to earn anything resembling a consistent role along the way.
- × Isaiah Crowell: Hasn't returned to football.
- × D'Onta Foreman: Joins Hill as the two most encouraging cases, but even then we're talking about an early-down committee piece who has typically just worked as a backup/handcuff in bad offenses over the years.
- × Arian Foster: Averaged just 2.5 yards per carry before suffering another lower-body injury, which led to his retirement.

BOTTOM LINE: Everyone is rooting for Dobbins to return to his electric self, but this seems like wishful thinking for at least 2024 — and accordingly it's unlikely he's able to earn a workhorse role or display his usual high-end efficiency in Los Angeles.

→ Ravens RB Keaton Mitchell (left knee)

His hyperextension and ACL tear was one of the more brutal-looking injuries of 2023. Yet general manager Eric DeCosta offered a somewhat optimistic update in March:

"I think Keaton is doing really well. We'll see.... I've gotten some updates from our trainers and doctors, and we feel like he's on path to come back at some point this season."

Dr. Chona notes that data suggests an October return is most likely and added that young RBs tend to see a ramp-up period in touches while experiencing an initial explosiveness dip.

Kudos to Mitchell for making the most out of his opportunities in 2023; his average of 8.4 yards per carry was the highest mark among 71 RBs with at least 45 carries. Still, he never received double-digit carries in any of his eight games last season and was just the RB58 in expected PPR points per game. Any level of dropoff in efficiency — which is expected — could prove detrimental to his fantasy upside.

BOTTOM LINE: Mitchell's best-case ramp-up and likely loss in efficiency make him unlikely to contribute many, if any, fantasy fireworks in 2024. The 22-year-old is nothing more than a last-round dart in fantasy land that you probably shouldn't throw.

WRs

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> CeeDee Lamb enters the season as fantasy's WR1 for the first time

< Puka Nacua looks to build off a year in which he shattered rookie records

COWBOYS

WR RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
1	CeeDee Lamb	Cowboys	2023	17	14	113	2	179	135	1749	12	338	19.9
			2024	16	8	51	0	160	112	1460	9	263	16.5
2	Tyreek Hill	Dolphins	2023	16	6	15	0	167	119	1799	13	319	19.9
			2024	16	6	36	0	153	107	1435	9	258	16.1
3	Ja'Marr Chase	Bengals	2023	16	3	-6	0	141	100	1216	7	213	13.3
			2024	16	4	20	0	144	97	1306	9	233	14.6
4	Amon-Ra St.Brown	Lions	2023	16	4	24	0	158	119	1515	10	273	17.1
			2024	16	4	28	0	152	114	1245	8	231	14.5
5	Justin Jefferson	Vikings	2023	10	1	-12	0	98	68	1074	5	170	17
			2024	16	4	21	0	150	96	1381	7	231	14.5
6	Puka Nacua	Rams	2023	17	12	89	0	153	105	1486	6	246	14.5
			2024	16	8	49	0	140	92	1263	7	220	13.7
7	Garrett Wilson	Jets	2023	17	4	0	0	163	95	1042	3	170	10
			2024	16	4	21	0	145	95	1182	8	215	13.4
8	A.J. Brown	Eagles	2023	17	0	0	0	152	106	1456	7	241	14.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	138	87	1280	7	213	13.3
9	Drake London	Falcons	2023	16	0	0	0	106	69	905	2	137	8.6
			2024	16	0	0	0	135	90	1154	7	205	12.8
10	Marvin Harrison Jr.	Cardinals	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	4	24	0	133	86	1079	6	191	11.9

> JA'MARR CHASE

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
11	Davante Adams	Raiders	2023	17	0	0	0	171	103	1144	8	214	12.6
			2024	16	0	0	0	146	93	1129	7	202	12.6
12	Chris Olave	Saints	2023	16	0	0	0	138	87	1123	5	186	11.6
			2024	16	0	0	0	134	85	1185	5	193	12.1
13	Deebo Samuel	49ers	2023	15	37	225	5	87	60	892	7	214	14.2
			2024	14.5	39	231	3	97	66	898	6	198	13.7
14	Brandon Aiyuk	49ers	2023	16	0	0	0	101	75	1342	7	214	13.4
			2024	16	0	0	0	110	75	1118	6	188	11.7
15	Stefon Diggs	Texans	2023	17	1	5	0	159	107	1183	8	220	13
			2024	16	0	0	0	131	87	1067	7	192	12
16	Mike Evans	Buccaneers	2023	17	0	0	0	127	79	1255	13	243	14.3
			2024	16	0	0	0	116	71	1049	8	191	11.9
17	D.J. Moore	Bears	2023	17	4	21	1	132	96	1364	8	241	14.1
			2024	16	4	23	0	117	72	1007	7	180	11.2
18	Jaylen Waddle	Dolphins	2023	14	3	12	0	104	72	1014	4	163	11.6
			2024	16	4	23	0	114	79	1081	6	185	11.6
19	Michael Pittman Jr.	Colts	2023	16	0	0	0	150	109	1152	4	194	12.1
			2024	16	0	0	0	141	96	1042	5	183	11.4
20	Nico Collins	Texans	2023	15	1	7	0	109	80	1297	8	218	14.6
			2024	16	0	0	0	109	68	943	7	169	10.5
21	Malik Nabers	Giants	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	4	23	0	131	85	1017	5	176	11
22	Cooper Kupp	Rams	2023	12	1	-3	0	92	59	737	5	133	11.1
			2024	15.5	4	22	0	122	83	997	7	185	11.9
23	D.K. Metcalf	Seahawks	2023	16	0	0	0	112	66	1114	8	192	12
			2024	16	0	0	0	120	73	1009	7	180	11.3
24	George Pickens	Steelers	2023	17	3	18	0	104	63	1140	5	177	10.4
			2024	16	2	13	0	114	68	1100	7	186	11.6
25	DeVonta Smith	Eagles	2023	16	0	0	0	112	81	1066	7	189	11.8
			2024	16	0	0	0	115	77	1021	6	177	11.1
26	Tank Dell	Texans	2023	11	12	51	0	74	47	709	7	142	12.9
			2024	16	12	69	1	99	63	933	7	176	11
27	Zay Flowers	Ravens	2023	16	8	56	1	104	77	858	5	166	10.4
			2024	16	6	40	0	118	84	961	6	179	11.2
28	Tee Higgins	Bengals	2023	12	0	0	0	74	42	656	5	117	9.7
			2024	16	0	0	0	111	73	1058	7	182	11.4
29	Amari Cooper	Browns	2023	15	0	0	0	122	72	1250	5	191	12.7
			2024	16	0	0	0	114	70	986	6	172	10.7
30	Christian Kirk	Jaguars	2023	12	1	6	0	80	57	788	3	126	10.5
			2024	16	4	22	0	116	82	1082	5	182	11.4

WR RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
31	Jayden Reed	Packers	2023	16	11	119	2	90	64	793	8	183	11.5
			2024	16	8	52	0	101	70	850	6	165	10.3
32	Keenan Allen	Bears	2023	13	2	6	0	145	108	1243	7	221	17
			2024	16	2	11	0	106	72	821	6	155	9.7
33	Terry McLaurin	Commanders	2023	17	0	0	0	128	79	1002	4	164	9.6
			2024	16	4	23	0	113	70	957	5	161	10.1
34	Marquise Brown	Chiefs	2023	14	2	23	0	94	51	574	4	109	7.8
			2024	16	2	11	0	116	72	835	7	164	10.2
35	Rashee Rice	Chiefs	2023	16	1	-3	0	100	79	938	7	175	10.9
			2024	12	1	8	0	93	68	767	6	148	12.3
36	Xavier Worthy	Chiefs	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	3	20	0	106	68	845	5	150	9.4
37	Rome Odunze	Bears	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	2	11	0	97	61	781	4	137	8.6
38	Diontae Johnson	Panthers	2023	13	0	0	0	86	51	717	5	127	9.8
			2024	16	4	19	0	124	77	906	5	162	10.1
39	DeAndre Hopkins	Titans	2023	17	2	9	0	133	75	1057	7	186	10.9
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	118	70	906	7	167	10.8
40	Jordan Addison	Vikings	2023	17	1	2	0	104	70	911	10	186	11
			2024	16	0	0	0	98	61	794	5	141	8.8
41	Brian Thomas Jr.	Jaguars	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	95	58	840	5	140	8.8
42	Calvin Ridley	Titans	2023	17	9	23	0	132	76	1016	8	190	11.2
			2024	16	4	21	0	107	61	825	6	154	9.6
43	Ladd McConkey	Chargers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	8	50	0	106	72	864	4	157	9.8
44	Christian Watson	Packers	2023	9	4	11	0	53	28	422	5	87	9.7
			2024	15	5	35	0	87	49	737	6	139	9.2
45	Keon Coleman	Bills	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	97	63	753	5	138	8.6
46	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	Seahawks	2023	17	0	0	0	90	63	628	4	118	7
			2024	16	0	0	0	97	68	678	5	129	8.1
47	Chris Godwin	Buccaneers	2023	17	4	38	1	123	83	1024	2	166	9.7
			2024	15	4	22	0	104	69	757	3	133	8.9
48	Tyler Lockett	Seahawks	2023	17	0	0	0	117	79	894	5	159	9.3
			2024	16	0	0	0	102	69	899	5	156	9.8
49	Curtis Samuel	Bills	2023	16	7	39	1	85	62	613	4	126	7.9
			2024	16	12	69	1	84	61	619	4	129	8.1
50	Josh Palmer	Chargers	2023	10	1	6	0	60	38	584	2	90	9
			2024	16	0	0	0	101	70	844	4	146	9.1

> JAYDEN REED

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
51	Khalil Shakir	Bills	2023	17	0	11	0	45	39	611	2	94	5.5
			2024	16	0	0	0	86	61	830	4	135	8.4
52	Courtland Sutton	Broncos	2023	16	0	0	0	87	59	777	10	167	10.5
			2024	16	0	0	0	104	62	788	4	135	8.4
53	Mike Williams	Jets	2023	3	1	3	0	25	19	249	1	41	13.6
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	83	53	755	5	135	8.7
54	Jakobi Meyers	Raiders	2023	16	4	24	2	106	71	807	8	179	11.2
			2024	16	4	22	0	105	69	780	5	145	9
55	Romeo Doubs	Packers	2023	17	1	-11	0	93	59	674	8	144	8.5
			2024	16	0	0	0	88	56	630	6	125	7.8
56	Rashid Shaheed	Saints	2023	15	7	37	0	71	46	719	5	129	8.6
			2024	16	4	26	0	76	49	741	4	129	8.1
57	Brandin Cooks	Cowboys	2023	16	4	32	0	82	55	660	8	145	9
			2024	16	4	26	0	88	57	710	6	139	8.7
58	Jameson Williams	Lions	2023	12	3	29	1	42	24	354	2	68	5.7
			2024	16	9	57	0	77	43	647	4	117	7.3
59	Adonai Mitchell	Colts	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	78	41	618	4	107	6.7
60	Adam Thielen	Panthers	2023	17	1	6	0	136	103	1014	4	178	10.4
			2024	16	0	0	0	91	63	676	5	128	8

> KHALIL SHAKIR

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
61	Jerry Jeudy	Browns	2023	16	0	0	0	84	54	758	2	115	7.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	89	55	715	4	121	7.5
62	Ja'Lynn Polk	Patriots	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	4	22	0	91	54	648	3	115	7.2
63	Josh Downs	Colts	2023	17	0	0	0	94	68	771	2	123	7.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	89	60	663	4	119	7.4
64	Gabriel Davis	Jaguars	2023	17	1	-2	0	78	45	746	7	139	8.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	80	44	693	5	118	7.4
65	Xavier Legette	Panthers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	79	48	572	4	103	6.5
66	Jermaine Burton	Bengals	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	67	41	516	3	91	5.7
67	Malachi Corley	Jets	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	8	48	0	70	45	498	3	98	6.1
68	Jahan Dotson	Commanders	2023	17	0	0	0	79	49	518	4	100	5.9
			2024	16	0	0	0	77	47	584	4	103	6.4
69	Darnell Mooney	Falcons	2023	15	2	5	0	55	31	414	1	63	4.2
			2024	16	4	23	0	82	53	690	4	123	7.7
70	Michael Wilson	Cardinals	2023	13	0	0	0	59	38	565	3	94	7.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	80	49	717	4	121	7.6
71	Roman Wilson	Steelers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	4	24	0	62	37	480	3	91	5.7
72	Ricky Pearsall	49ers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	6	39	0	49	32	414	3	78	4.9
73	Dontayvion Wicks	Packers	2023	15	1	1	0	57	39	580	4	102	6.8
			2024	16	0	0	0	39	26	360	3	67	4.2
74	Troy Franklin	Broncos	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	63	38	436	2	76	4.8
75	Marvin Mims Jr.	Broncos	2023	16	9	30	0	32	22	377	1	58	3.6
			2024	16	4	22	0	68	41	612	3	103	6.4
76	Quentin Johnston	Chargers	2023	17	3	9	0	65	38	431	2	75	4.4
			2024	16	4	25	0	61	37	440	3	86	5.4
77	DeMario Douglas	Patriots	2023	14	8	41	0	76	49	561	0	85	6.1
			2024	16	4	22	0	95	59	636	2	111	6.9
78	Wan'Dale Robinson	Giants	2023	15	9	87	1	76	60	525	1	103	6.9
			2024	16	8	51	0	74	57	487	2	97	6.1
79	Rashod Bateman	Ravens	2023	16	1	18	0	55	32	367	1	61	3.8
			2024	16	0	0	0	68	43	513	4	95	5.9
80	Luke McCaffrey	Commanders	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	68	43	410	2	77	4.8

WR RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
81	Javon Baker	Patriots	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	39	23	282	2	50	3.1
82	Demarcus Robinson	Rams	2023	13	1	23	0	39	26	371	4	76	5.9
			2024	16	0	0	0	78	50	590	4	106	6.6
83	Elijah Moore	Browns	2023	17	9	11	0	98	59	640	2	107	6.3
			2024	16	4	24	0	70	42	474	3	88	5.5
84	Treylon Burks	Titans	2023	11	5	18	0	29	16	221	0	32	2.9
			2024	15	2	11	0	54	31	421	2	72	4.8
85	Jalin Hyatt	Giants	2023	17	0	0	0	40	23	373	0	49	2.9
			2024	16	0	0	0	43	25	383	2	61	3.8
86	Kendrick Bourne	Patriots	2023	8	1	4	0	55	37	406	4	84	10.4
			2024	15	0	0	0	59	37	423	2	74	5
87	Greg Dortch	Cardinals	2023	13	1	5	0	38	24	281	2	53	4
			2024	16	0	0	0	52	38	377	2	70	4.3
88	Rondale Moore	Falcons	2023	17	28	178	1	61	40	352	1	85	5
			2024	16	15	92	1	65	48	420	3	99	6.2
89	Kalif Raymond	Lions	2023	17	7	75	0	43	35	489	1	80	4.7
			2024	16	4	27	0	60	43	536	3	94	5.9
90	Van Jefferson	Steelers	2023	17	1	4	0	42	20	209	0	31	1.8
			2024	16	0	0	0	47	24	343	2	58	3.6
91	Jonathan Mingo	Panthers	2023	15	0	0	0	83	43	418	0	63	4.2
			2024	16	0	0	0	48	27	306	2	54	3.4
92	Malik Washington	Dolphins	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	26	17	205	1	36	2.2
93	Devontez Walker	Ravens	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	24	14	205	1	32	2
94	Kyle Philips	Titans	2023	9	0	0	0	22	15	181	0	26	2.8
			2024	16	0	0	0	39	25	298	1	49	3
95	Josh Reynolds	Broncos	2023	17	0	0	0	61	40	608	5	111	6.5
			2024	16	0	0	0	33	20	249	1	42	2.6
96	Nelson Agholor	Ravens	2023	17	0	0	0	45	35	381	4	80	4.7
			2024	16	0	0	0	51	32	390	3	72	4.5
97	Darius Slayton	Giants	2023	17	0	0	0	76	50	769	4	126	7.4
			2024	16	0	0	0	50	30	420	2	68	4.3
98	Jalen Tolbert	Cowboys	2023	17	0	0	0	35	22	268	2	50	2.9
			2024	16	0	0	0	47	29	375	2	63	3.9
99	Trey Palmer	Buccaneers	2023	17	3	22	0	66	39	385	3	78	4.6
			2024	16	0	0	0	52	31	361	2	66	4.1
100	Jalen McMillan	Buccaneers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	16	0	0	0	47	30	331	2	59	3.7

Wide Receiver Sleepers for 2024

Packers' Dontayvion Wicks among four players who stand out as diamonds in the rough

BY CHRIS ALLEN

> DONTAYVION WICKS

Wide receiver is arguably the most difficult skill position to evaluate and project for fantasy purposes. Consider what it takes to be a WR1.

It already means the ball is coming that player's way often. However, footwork, release technique or alignment has allowed him to gain separation before the QB makes the throw.

Then there's the burst, speed and/or power to propel through (or around) defenders after securing the ball.

In other words, a wide-out's inherent traits help him stand out.

But sometimes they're not enough.

A pass-catcher's surroundings can undercut their talent. Smooth routes aren't as useful when the QB tucks the ball and runs at the first sign of pressure.

Good WR play exists at the intersection of talent and situation — and I've got a process to find a few examples for the 2024 season.

→ Process

Like other positions, each player has a different skill set. Their contrasting styles can make it difficult to set thresholds. So I stripped away the names and looked at the last five seasons of PPR results.

- Top 6 (WR1A): 313.6 total PPR points, 19.6 PPG
- Top 12 (WR1B): 255.5, 16.5
- Top 24 (WR2): 222.74, 14.4
- Top 36 (WR3): 185.2, 12.7

On the one hand, it's a good thing we've used our collective knowledge to identify the top-tier WRs from each class.

But on the flip side, we leave ourselves with lesser talent in the later rounds. The hit rates for WRs look more like lucky strikes than coming from a structured approach.

- WR1A: 1.4%
- WR1B: 2.8%
- WR2: 5.6%
- WR3: 9.7%

Luckily, there are some actionable takeaways from the data.

→ Establishing Archetypes

What's happened for offenses in the past largely informs what we think will occur next. We can acknowledge that player production shifts and coaching tendencies evolve, but quantifying the change is nearly impossible. It's why leaning into uncertainty can pay off for fantasy managers.

Ten WRs from the late rounds have eclipsed 200 PPR points over the past five years. Four were rookies, and two others were in their second year. The remaining four experienced a change of scenery. Nico Collins stayed in Houston but was paired with C.J. Stroud. Adam Thielen moved to Carolina and sucked up 137 targets.

Considering we might be wrong about pecking orders or offensive efficiency can pay dividends.

However, the player still needs to possess the requisite talent level to take advantage of the situation.

→ Dontayvion Wicks
Green Bay Packers

Dontayvion Wicks currently sits at WR4 for the **P**ackers. His value makes sense.

Wicks saw only 58 targets last year, and now — with Christian Watson healthy, Romeo Doubs coming off statement games in the back half of last season and Jayden Reed establishing himself as the team's do-it-all pass-catching option — Wicks should be behind their primary trio. But he showed last year he can force a WR3B situation.

Subjectively, Green Bay needs to develop other weapons for QB Jordan Love. Each member of the receiving triumvirate missed time due to injury. Watson alone sat out eight games with hamstring issues.

Objectively, Wicks' contextualized workload emphasizes he has more value than his **ADP** suggests.

- **P**lay-**A**ction Targets: 2nd (team target share), 1st (targets per route run)
- Third-/Fourth-Down Targets: 3rd, 1st
- **YP**RR: 2nd
- First Downs per Target: 1st

These are all good metrics for a developing WR. However, the one that caught my eye was his usage in two-WR sets. Green Bay ran concepts with two receivers on the field at the seventh-highest rate in 2023. In those sets, Wicks had the highest **TP**RR rate, even with Watson and Doubs active. His 3.81 **YP**RR was more than the other two combined (1.19, 1.80). Meanwhile, Reed barely saw the field, touching the ball just once in this personnel grouping.

Wicks ran a route on only 45% of Love's dropbacks in '23, but has clearly earned more playing time — a larger role isn't out of the question.

→ Darnell Mooney
Atlanta Falcons

The last we saw of Darnell Mooney, he was (narrowly) dropping a Hail Mary heave from Justin Fields in Week 15. Unfortunately, the result is emblematic of his career: so close to being a WR worth targeting, and yet so far.

Injuries have marred Mooney's last two seasons. However, when Fields came on the scene in 2021, Mooney was not just the man in Chicago, he stood out amongst his peers.

- Total Target **S**hare: 6th (out of 35 WRs; min 100 targets)
- **P**lay-**A**ction T**P**RR: 17th
- **RZ** Target **S**hare: 20th
- Third-/Fourth-Down Target **S**hare: 16th

Mooney's target and air yards share rose once Fields took the job from **A**ndy Dalton (but then had to give it back after getting hurt). **A**nd Mooney cashed in on the opportunity. **A**t 12.9 **PP**R **PP**G, he ranked fifth among second-year WRs and finished the season as a WR2. Now he has a shot at being the second option in **A**tlanta. We can project a productive environment based on the coaching and QB. Kirk Cousins ranked eighth in E**PA** per play before his **A**chilles tear. OC **Z**ac Robinson comes from the **S**ean McVay tree. **P**lus, Cousins' offenses have been fruitful for more than just the primary guy.

- 2023: Jordan **A**ddison, 15.3% target share (in games with Jefferson), 24th in **PP**R **PP**G
- 2022: **A**dam Thielen, 16.7%, 38th
- 2021: Thielen, 16.4%, 14th
- 2020: Thielen, 22.3%, 11th

For science, for the culture even, pairing a good QB with Drake London and Kyle **P**itts is something we've always wanted. But don't forget about Mooney.

→ Greg Dortch
Atlanta Cardinals

I realize the Cardinals went **3**–5 down the stretch when QB Kyler Murray returned.

But with all of last year's speculation about Murray's future in Arizona, we forgot how much of an impact he made on the offense.

- Plays per Game: 2**3**rd without Murray, **9**th with Murray
- EPA per Play: 27th, **9**th
- Yards per Drive: 27th, 5th

Perhaps not coincidentally, Greg Dortch's resurgence came with Murray's '**23** debut. Marquise Brown was sidelined with injuries, leaving Trey McBride, Rondale Moore and the 5-foot-7 slot man as the main weapons.

And as his on-field demeanor suggests, Dortch was up for the challenge.

- Target Share: 1st among Arizona WRs
- Air Yard Share: 2nd
- TPRR: 1st
- YPRR: 1st

Only Trey McBride saw more targets in obvious passing situations than Dortch over that stretch.

Now Moore is in Atlanta and Hollywood Brown is playing with Patrick Mahomes. Sure, Marvin Harrison **J**r. will absorb a majority of Murray's attention, but this year's WR1 has only a 15.6% snap rate from the slot.

There's no one else on the depth chart to challenge Dortch for work on the inside, making him a worthwhile target in the late rounds.

→ Demarcus Robinson
Los Angeles Rams

Yes, I realize Robinson has been a cast-off at his previous stops. In Kansas City, he couldn't accrue more than 60 targets in any of his six seasons there, even with Patrick Mahomes as his quarterback. He barely beat out Devin Duvernay in Baltimore — he had just five more targets than Duvernay while QB Lamar **J**ackson was healthy — and averaged just **9**.5 yards per catch in his one season there.

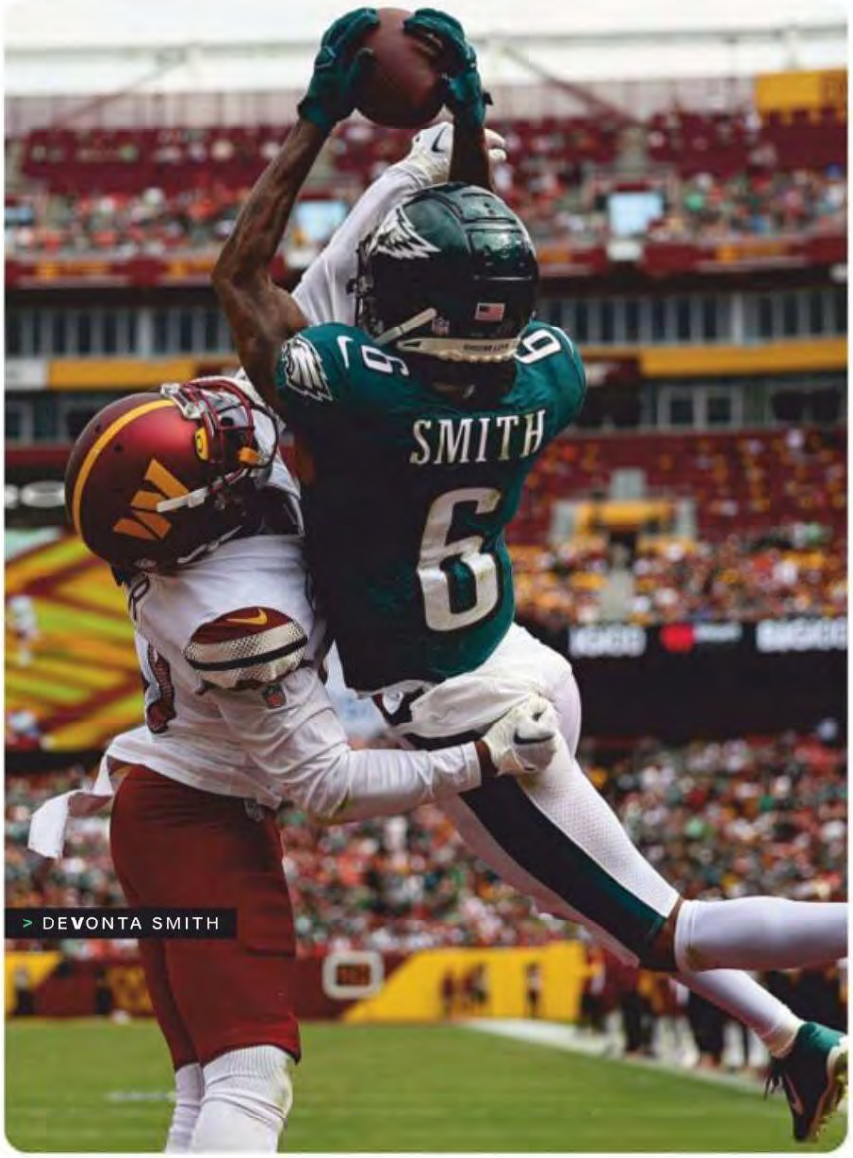
But 2024 looks different for the **3**0-year-old WR, at least on paper.

The Rams deployed three WRs at the highest rate in the league, **94**.5%, in 20**23**. No other team was over **90**.0%.

L.A. tried to give Tutu Atwell a shot at blending into the offense, but by Week 11, when Robinson's snap rate jumped over 50.0%, it was clear Robinson had a hold on the job.

- Rate Route: 80.**3**% (Robinson), 24.4% (Atwell), 1**3**.8% (Ben Skowronek)
- Target Share: 16.0%, 4.4%, 2.7%
- TPRR: 17.6%, 16.1%, 17.1%

Down the stretch, Robinson's **31**.0% air yard share was more than Cooper Kupp's (**19**.4%). And Robinson beat out Puka Nacua in explosive play rate (27.0% to **23**.3%). That's not to say Robinson is better than either WR, but he' a good fit in the offense as the third option for QB Matthew Stafford. And with TE Tyler Higbee likely sidelined for most of the regular season, Robinson's role might even increase in 2024.



> DEVONTA SMITH

Talkin' Wide Receivers

Breakout picks, Do Not Draft options, impact rookies and bold 2024 predictions

BY IAN HARTITZ, DWAIN MCFARLAND & KENDALL VALENZUELA

Most fantasy football drafters will be selecting multiple early-round wide receivers and rarely straying from the position for too long as their drafts unfold. The NFL Draft has added an influx of talent to the position, and the NFL offseason shook up more than a few receiver rooms.

That's why we must look to Fantasy Life's resident WR experts for their insights on the 2024 wide receiver landscape, plus their bold predictions for the position in 2024.

Q: Which WR are you higher on than the market and why?

→ George Pickens Pittsburgh Steelers

In early best ball contests, Pickens was drafted on average at the WR30 slot. Drafters seem suspicious of the mediocre QB room (Russell Wilson and Justin Fields) and the arrival of fantasy football's No. 1 nemesis, Arthur Smith. The Fantasy Life projection model agrees with those concerns, forecasting the Steelers passing offense as a bottom-five unit. Historically, WRs on offenses that average 200 or so passing yards haven't fared well. Only 12% of them have found their way to a top-24 finish since 2011.

However, we're talking about an ascending talent who no longer has to fight for targets

with Diontae Johnson, whose target-earning numbers graded out at the WR1 level based on data from the last 10 seasons.

Over the last two years, Pickens has a juicy 26% target share when Johson wasn't on the field, and in four games without Johnson in 2023, Pickens averaged 17 fantasy points despite Pittsburgh ranking as the fourth-worst passing unit in the NFL.

The Steelers took Roman Wilson in the NFL Draft' third round, but his profile doesn't suggest target competition in Year 1. Pat Freiermuth is a good TE, but he has never flashed the high-end ceiling we've seen from Pickens.

When you add it all up, Pickens is a low-end WR2 with high-end WR2 upside that you can draft as a WR3.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ DeVonta Smith
Philadelphia Eagles

This offseason was a good one for Smith and the Eagles; both sides agreed to a contract extension worth $75 million that will keep the Smith on the team through 2028.

In 2022, Smith and AJ Brown became the first WR tandem in Eagles history to both reach 1,000 receiving yards, and they did the same thing in 2023. The big reason why I'm higher on Smith is because it's a make-or-break season for head coach Nick Sirianni and I think that results in a revamped, hungry offense.

They have a new offensive coordinator in Kellen Moore, and Smith will benefit most from his arrival. Moore didn't have his best season as OC of the Chargers in 2023 (18th in offense), but the four years prior in Dallas shows his history of success.

Led by QB Jalen Hurts, this Eagles offense has ranked fifth in points per game (26.8) over the last two seasons, and Smith has logged 240 catches for 3,178 yards and 19 touchdowns over three seasons. Sign me up for a revamp and a top finish for Smith in 2024.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

→ Rashid Shaheed
New Orleans Saints

Nobody has averaged more yards per target than Shaheed (11.1) among 174 players with at least 100 targets over the past two seasons. Is yards per target the world's best stat to indicate stardom at the position? Not necessarily, but it's at least a good place to start when assessing the speedy 25-year-old. Good things have happened when the 2023 first-team All-Pro returner touches the football.

His playmaking ability helped Shaheed produce as many top 12 PPR finishes as teammate Chris Olave (3) last season. The early-season presence of Michael Thomas (now a free agent) and a Week 12 hamstring injury hindered the former undrafted free agent's production in 2023 ... but what if he's suddenly looking at a newfound full-time role in 2024?

This seems to miraculously be the case: Shaheed projects as the Saints' clear-cut No. 2 WR ahead of underwhelming competition (A.T. Perry, Equanimeous St. Brown, Cedrick Wilson Jr. and their only WR draft pick, fifth-rounder Bub Means). Don't confuse this with an early- or even middle-round endorsement, but drafting young, talented starters in passing games that might not completely suck is what late-round dart dreams are made of.

— IAN HARTITZ

Q: Which WR are you lower on than the market (i.e. a Do Not Draft player) and why?

→ D.J. Moore
Chicago Bears

Moore soared to WR9 status in 2023 with the Bears, averaging 17 fantasy points per game. However, 2024 brings concerns. Despite being drafted at WR14, adjustments haven't matched the red flags.

The Bears boosted their WR corps with Keenan Allen and Rome Odunze, both promising additions. Even at 32, Allen performed well in 2023 with a 30% target share, while Odunze ranks as the fifth-best WR prospect since 2018 in the Fantasy Life Super Model.

Moore's career-high 22% target per route rate places him in WR2 territory, leaving little room for error with Allen and Odunze joining. New offensive coordinator Shane Waldron's history

also raises concerns, as his Seahawks offense ranked last in regulation plays per game (58) in 2023.

That said, the Bears seem poised to prioritize passing, especially with Caleb Williams at the helm. While this shift may benefit Moore, Williams' rookie status naturally adds uncertainty; Moore may dip to WR3 territory if Williams struggles. He remains a viable option, albeit one who is more low-end WR2 than a near WR1.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Deebo Samuel
San Francisco 49ers

When healthy, Deebo is arguably the NFL's most beastly WR, regularly racking up YAC and forcing missed tackles like his life depends on it.

However, he needs to be at his best pretty much all the time to make up for a less-than-ideal workload. Extra RB carries are fine, but not when they come at the expense of targets.

> Deebo expected and realized PPR points/game

- × 2023: 16.2 realized (WR13), 12.1 expected (WR33)
- × 2022: 13.3 realized (WR28), 13.5 expected (WR21)
- × 2021: 21.1 realized (WR3), 15 expected (WR14)

Essentially the Nick Chubb of WRs, Samuel's current expected top 20 ADP is a bit lofty for my liking considering the 28-year-old hasn't come close to seeing WR1-level volume. Throw in the team's decision to add even more competition in the form of first-rounder Ricky Pearsall and Deebo likely will need more help from the injury gods than just keeping him upright if he's to produce like an early-round fantasy pick.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Chris Olave
New Orleans Saints

Yeah, I can't believe I am somewhat fading Olave in the year 2024, but here we are. I can't shake the feeling that the talent is there with Olave, but the connection with Derek Carr won't develop like we hoped.

Per Ian Hartitz's "Sheesh Report," Olave had 1,145 unrealized air yards in 2023, which was the second-most behind Titans wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins. The intent heading into this season is for Olave to be the centerpiece in a passing attack that is picking up steam from last year. Everything was there for him in 2023, too, and to be fair, he didn't have a bad season. Olave had 87 receptions, 1,123 yards, five touchdowns and finished as the fantasy WR24 in PPR leagues. I just don't think a top 10 fantasy finish is in the cards this season.

Last year he locked down an 83% route participation, 25% targets per route run and 39% air yards share. Every week, the metrics pointed to a breakout for Olave if everything came together, but we didn't see the full potential realized. He's insanely talented, but I'm unwilling to bet that the chemistry with his QB, Derek Carr, will rise to the next level. Fading Olave is not for the weak, especially because we haven't seen a full season of what he can truly be. I'm willing to draft him if he falls a bit past ADP, but I like other receivers being taken around him just a bit more.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

Q: What is your bold prediction for the WR position in 2024?

→ Marvin Harrison Jr. will post a Top 5 fantasy season

Is this a bold prediction? Asking for a friend ...

I think this is a testament to just how good I think Harrison Jr. will be and also a bet that Cardinals quarterback Kyler Murray will be able to support one fantasy star (and potentially two in TE Trey McBride). You don't need me to tell you just how good Harrison really is; through three seasons at Ohio State, he made 155 catches for 2,613 yards and 31 touchdowns (plus a rushing TD). Six of the last seven wide receivers picked in the top five posted top-30 fantasy performances as a rookie. The last big one was Ja'Marr Chase finishing as the fantasy WR5 in 2021.

Harrison is a dynamic weapon who can bring out the best in Murray and elevate him. I know the Cardinals are in rebuilding mode, but I think it has been accelerated and Harrison's presence will be the jolt this team needed. I'm not going to go out on a limb and make comparisons like others have to Larry Fitzgerald, but the immediate and future impact Harrison will have are going to be huge. It's on him, and Murray, to get there.

— KENDALL VALENZUELA

> DRAKE LONDON

→ Falcons' Drake London breaks out

London dealt with horrendous QB play and a run-heavy play-caller in Arthur Smith over his first two seasons. That combination submarined his impressive WR1-worthy 24% target share.

However, London should be free from those issues in 2024. Former Rams coordinator Zac Robinson is taking over play-calling duties, and the QB room is completely different with the additions of Kirk Cousins in free agency and Michael Penix Jr. in the draft's first round.

Kirk Cousins averaged 271 yards per game over his last three seasons in Minnesota — a massive upgrade over Desmond Ridder (187), Taylor Heinicke (178) and Marcus Mariota (171). If Cousins goes down, Penix Jr. offers a good backstop.

It's hard to find teams that experienced a near 100-yards-per-game jump in passing yards year over year in the history of the NFL, but we do have some fairly recent examples: Eric Decker jumped 7.3 points per game in 2012 with the arrival of Peyton Manning in Denver. For the Colts, T.Y. Hilton experienced a six-point surge after Andrew Luck returned to the field in 2018 after missing the previous season.

Look for London's high-end talent profile to finally shine through in a big way in 2024 with a top 12 fantasy finish.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ None of the Big 3 rookie WRs best their respective ADPs

Warranted or unwarranted hype, injuries and newfound information regarding depth charts regularly result in huge ADP swings across the board in a fantasy football offseason. That said, first-round WR picks Marvin Harrison Jr. (Cardinals), Malik Nabers (Giants) and Rome Odunze (Bears) sure don't seem to be flying under the radar in early drafts:

- Maserati Marv looks like he'll be a top-10 WR and a probable second-round pick.
- Nabers should go a round or two later, but he's also a likely candidate to be taken among the top 50 selections in far more drafts than not.
- Odunze suffered the biggest post-draft fall due to the crowded status of the Bears' passing game, but he still projects as, at worst, on the WR3 borderline.

It's true that all three could turn into studs, even if that reality doesn't come to fruition in 2024. There have been just 13 rookie WRs to post top-24 fantasy numbers in PPR points per game since 2014, and good won't quite be great enough to cut it at their respective ADPs.

— IAN HARTITZ

> TANK DELL

WR Injury Report

Four key wide receiver injuries to monitor as the 2024 NFL season approaches

BY IAN HARTITZ

> SAD BUT TRUE: You can't score fantasy points without being on the field first.

While we can't necessarily control for future injuries, we can do our best to evaluate existing issues to determine the overall fantasy impact. And by "we," I mean actual doctors who are kind enough to offer fantasy-specific expertise, such as:

- Edwin Porras DPT (@FBInjuryDoc)
- Jeff Mueller PT, DPT (@jmthrivept)
- Jesse Morse MD (@drjessemorse)
- Deepak Chona MD (@SportMDAnalysis)

Here are four key WR injuries to be concerned with ahead of the 2024 fantasy season.

→ Texans WR Tank Dell (left leg)

All of our doctor friends seem to be echoing good vibes here:

- Dr. Morse believes Dell will be 100% with no issues for 2024.
- Dr. Chona notes that the data suggests there will be no lingering impact.
- Dr. Mueller adds Dell's best return-to-play comp is Jaylen Waddle and not Tony Pollard.

A broken fibula is nothing to scoff at, but Dell has been back running for some time and worked out with C.J. Stroud and new teammate Stefon Diggs in April. Stroud noted that Dell "looks great" and believes he'll be cleared for the start of training camp.

BOTTOM LINE: There were rumors that Dell could have returned to the team had the Texans advanced deeper in the postseason, and now all signs point to the electric second-year WR being healthy enough to regain his starting role by Week 1. The larger concern in fantasy land is if there will be enough targets to go around in this suddenly crowded (but still lethal) passing attack.

→ Jets WR Mike Williams (left knee)

Williams underwent surgery on Oct. 26, 2023, meaning he'll have had 10 and a half months to recover before Week 1. Jets GM Joe Douglas gave the following update on Williams on March 25:

"Mike's rehabbing the knee injury. I would say he's not gonna be

ready for the start of training camp, but again, there's a lot of time, so we'll see how the rehab progresses. There's a lot of checkpoints to hit, but we do feel confident that he's gonna be ready for the year."

Not ideal, but Williams should be able to settle into the No. 2 WR role for Aaron Rodgers soon. The 29-year-old played between 13 and 16 games every year from 2018 to '22, so the thought that Williams was "injury prone" always boiled down to him routinely getting banged up rather than failing to suit up for games.

BOTTOM LINE: There are some warranted age-related concerns here and a potential lack of early-season explosiveness for a WR not exactly known for having elite field-stretching speed in the first place. It seems unlikely that Williams will return to the fantasy WR2 conversation as the clear-cut No. 2 (at best) pass-game option with the Jets; he profiles as more of a boom-or-bust WR4 in fantasy.

→ Patriots WR Kendrick Bourne (right knee)

Similar to Williams, it's realistic to believe Bourne will be ready for Week 1 considering he got the surgery done in mid-November, but a loss in early-season effectiveness is possible.

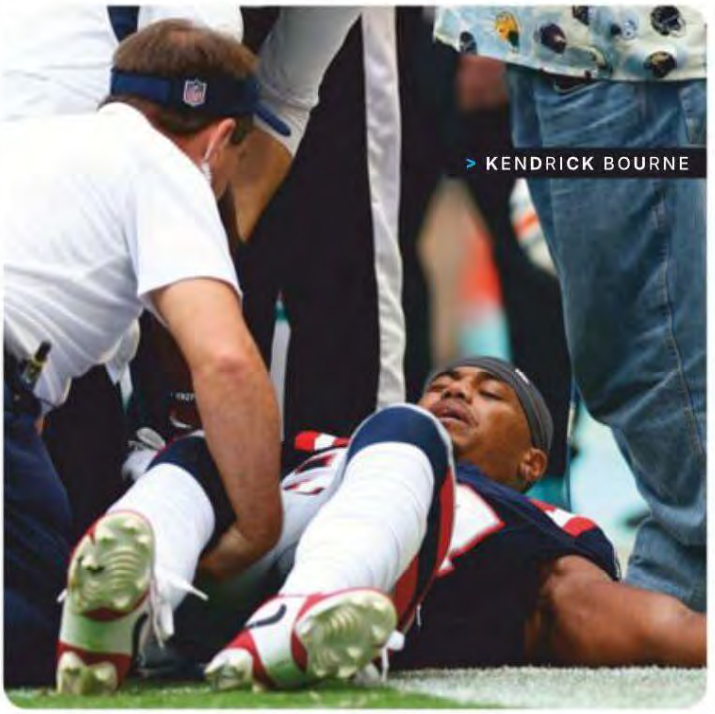
Also similar to Williams: Bourne will be 29 when the 2024 season starts and also will be adjusting to life with a new QB to work with.

The good news: Bourne seems like a better bet to be ready for training camp if his own words are to be believed:

"He (surgeon Neal ElAttrache) let me know that I'm going to be ready, come in minicamp getting ready and then training camp I'm full go.... My plan is to play Game 1. I believe I'll be ready. Where I'm at right now, on track, ahead of schedule and I feel good. So building that confidence, building my strength in my legs so that I can be ready to go Game 1."

Nobody is expecting Bourne to work as an alpha No. 1 WR in 2024, but the veteran deserves credit for earning ESPN's 14th-highest receiver score last season. Bourne was averaging a career-high 50.8 yards per game before his ACL tear.

BOTTOM LINE: A better QB situation could improve Bourne's production in 2024 and beyond, although returning from this injury won't help the typical downward slope WRs begin to face around this point in their careers. He's nothing more than a hopeful late-round dart due to this assortment of red flags.



> KENDRICK BOURNE

→ Broncos WR Tim Patrick (left Achilles)

The timing of Patrick's tear actually makes him likely to return by Week 1, but at a minimum, we should still expect to see his stats dip until late in the season. The 30-year-old hasn't played a game since 2021.

BOTTOM LINE: Betting on a thirtysomething WR to rebound in a major way coming off back-to-back brutal, season-ending lower-body injuries while also being forced to acclimate to a new QB under center in what profiles to be one of the league's worst offenses seems unwise.

TE

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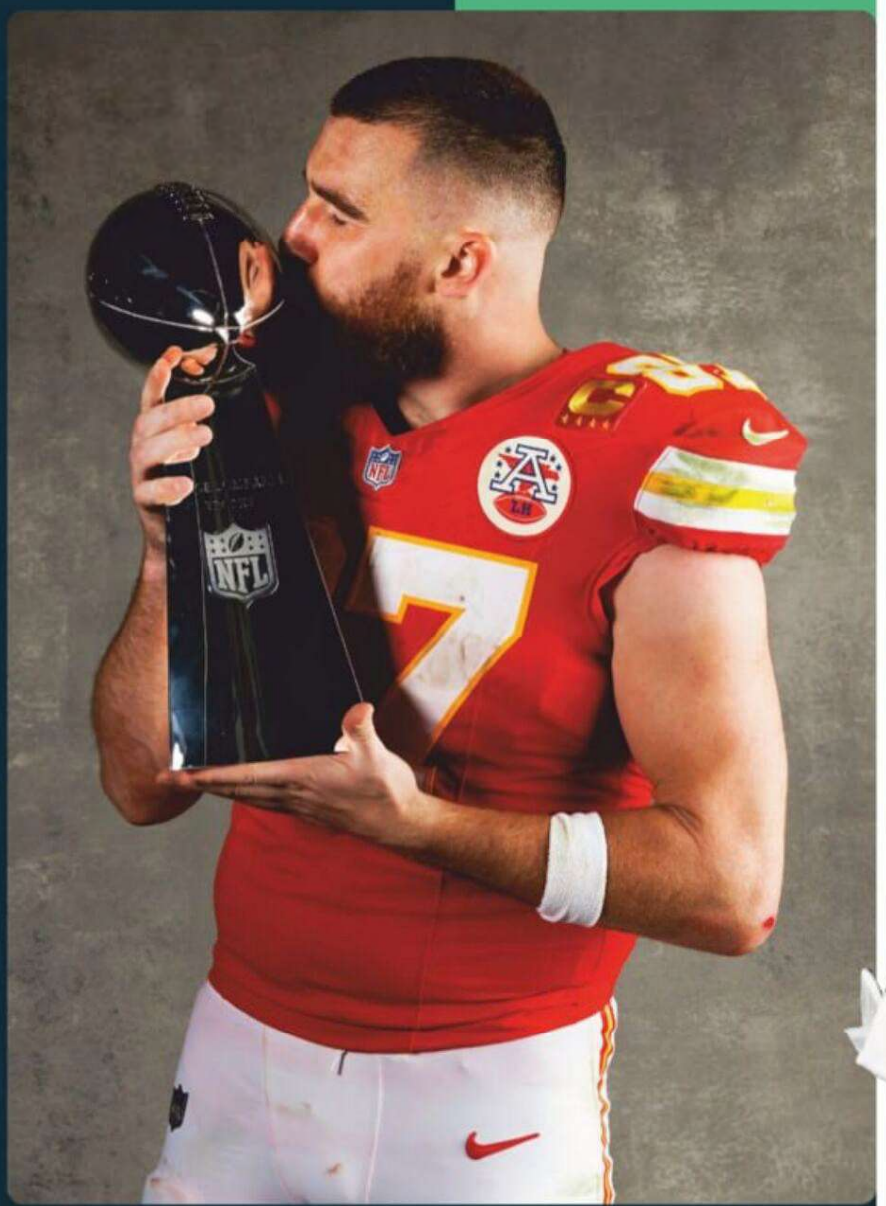

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Sam LaPorta has a chance to build on his double-digit TD total as a rookie.

<

Travis Kelce secured another Lombardi Trophy but how much is left in the tank?

TE RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
1	Sam LaPorta	Lions	2023	17	1	4	0	118	86	889	10	192	11.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	112	80	822	8	168	10.8
2	Travis Kelce	Chiefs	2023	15	0	0	0	117	93	984	5	175	11.7
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	113	81	899	7	170	11
3	Trey McBride	Cardinals	2023	17	0	0	0	105	81	825	3	141	8.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	120	91	897	5	167	10.7
4	Mark Andrews	Ravens	2023	10	1	0	0	60	45	544	6	113	11.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	103	71	865	7	164	10.6
5	Dalton Kincaid	Bills	2023	16	0	0	0	90	73	673	2	116	7.2
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	106	82	803	6	158	10.2
6	Kyle Pitts	Falcons	2023	17	1	-4	0	86	53	667	3	111	6.5
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	101	62	873	6	153	9.9
7	George Kittle	49ers	2023	16	1	2	0	89	65	1020	6	171	10.7
			2024	15	0	0	0	83	61	806	6	147	9.8
8	Evan Engram	Jaguars	2023	17	0	0	0	140	114	963	4	177	10.4
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	111	81	756	4	140	9
9	Jake Ferguson	Cowboys	2023	17	0	0	0	96	71	761	5	142	8.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	90	70	693	5	132	8.5
10	David Njoku	Browns	2023	16	0	0	0	120	81	882	6	165	10.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	89	61	637	5	124	8
11	Dallas Goedert	Eagles	2023	14	1	1	0	81	59	592	3	107	7.6
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	85	64	746	4	128	8.3
12	Brock Bowers	Raiders	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	64	46	501	3	94	6.1
13	Dalton Schultz	Texans	2023	15	0	0	0	84	59	635	5	123	8.2
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	76	53	562	5	112	7.2
14	T.J. Hockenson	Vikings	2023	15	0	0	0	124	95	960	5	174	11.6
			2024	9	0	0	0	47	32	304	3	62	6.9
15	Pat Freiermuth	Steelers	2023	12	0	0	0	44	32	308	2	59	4.9
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	76	53	526	5	107	6.9
16	Cole Kmet	Bears	2023	17	3	2	0	88	73	719	6	145	8.5
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	63	44	469	4	94	6
17	Luke Musgrave	Packers	2023	11	0	0	0	45	34	352	1	58	5.3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	58	43	443	3	85	5.5
18	Hunter Henry	Patriots	2023	14	0	0	0	62	42	419	6	99	7.1
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	67	44	490	4	95	6.1
19	Cade Otton	Buccaneers	2023	17	0	0	0	67	47	456	4	93	5.5
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	62	42	406	3	81	5.2
20	Tyler Conklin	Jets	2023	17	1	0	0	83	61	622	0	93	5.5
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	72	52	512	2	92	5.9

> DALTON KINCAID

TE RANKINGS AND PROJECTIONS

RANK	PLAYER	TEAM	SEASON	GAMES	RUSH ATT	RUSH YARDS	RUSH TDS	TARGETS	REC	REC YARDS	REC TDS	FANTASY POINTS	FANTASY POINTS PER GAME
21	Juwan Johnson	Saints	2023	13	0	0	0	58	37	368	4	79	6.1
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	64	41	456	4	91	5.9
22	Jonnu Smith	Dolphins	2023	17	1	0	0	69	50	582	3	101	6
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	59	42	418	3	83	5.4
23	Chigoziem Okonkwo	Titans	2023	17	2	6	0	74	54	528	1	86	5.1
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	64	45	504	2	87	5.6
24	Ben Sinnott	Commanders	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	44	30	283	2	56	3.6
25	Michael Mayer	Raiders	2023	14	0	0	0	37	27	304	2	56	4
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	43	31	341	2	64	4.1
26	Isaiah Likely	Ravens	2023	17	0	0	0	37	30	411	5	86	5.1
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	20	14	164	2	33	2.2
27	Noah Fant	Seahawks	2023	17	0	0	0	42	32	414	0	57	3.4
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	61	46	480	3	88	5.7
28	Ja'Tavion Sanders	Panthers	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	22	15	143	0	23	1.5
29	Greg Dulcich	Broncos	2023	2	0	0	0	4	3	25	0	4	2
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	61	35	418	3	76	4.9
30	Jelani Woods	Colts	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	49	31	390	3	73	4.7
31	Theo Johnson	Giants	2023	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	19	13	120	1	25	1.6
32	Darren Waller	Giants	2023	12	0	0	0	72	52	552	1	87	7.3
			2024	14	0	0	0	64	43	474	2	81	5.8
33	Zach Ertz	Commanders	2023	7	0	0	0	42	27	187	1	38	5.5
			2024	15	0	0	0	59	41	373	3	74	4.9
34	Mike Gesicki	Bengals	2023	17	0	0	0	43	29	243	2	51	3
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	50	34	344	4	76	4.9
35	Tucker Kraft	Packers	2023	17	0	0	0	39	31	355	2	63	3.7
			2024	15.5	0	0	0	36	28	298	2	56	3.6

> DARREN WALLER

> CHIGOZIEM OKONKWO

Tight End Sleepers for 2024

Under-the-radar prospects at a position where steady targets matter just about as much as talent

BY CHRIS ALLEN

> JUWAN JOHNSON

Honestly, I'm still trying to figure out the tight end position.

Not just what they do, but why they play the role. Using this year as an example, the franchise tag price for an O-lineman ($20.985 million) is more than 65% more than it is for a tight end ($12.693 million). Most of them don't churn out consistent production in the NFL until their second contract. As a 5-foot-9, 170-pound fantasy writer, I'd simply say get bigger and play a different position. But enough about me.

The league meta has changed. TE archetypes are more diverse. And despite the "glorified WR" being the popular profile to target, we can find useful options later in the draft.

→ Process

As alluded to above, we already have categories established for tight ends. Based on past usage (collegiate and professional) and athletic profile, we can typically gauge where each player will fall on the spectrum.

- WR playing TE: primarily a route runner and can create fantasy value through volume (e.g. Travis Kelce, Sam LaPorta)
- Move TE: a blocker and short-range receiver; rely more on touchdowns to be a TE1 (e.g. Hunter Henry, Luke Musgrave)
- Moves-slow TE: primarily a blocker, but can produce as a short-yardage/goal-line option (e.g., MyCole Pruitt, Drew Sample)

While the Kelces and George Kittles of the world are more reliable each week, a two-TD game from Donald Parham Jr. lies in wait. Accordingly, we can spot some of the viable TEs ahead of time utilizing key metrics and correlating them to fantasy points.

- Target Share: 0.62 (r-squared)
- TPRR: 0.34
- Route Rate: 0.27
- (Team-Level) Yards per Drive: 0.18
- (Team-Level) EPA per Play: 0.12
- (Team-Level) Pass Rate Over Expectation: 0.11

Of course, volume is king. But running routes and earning looks on a lesser route rate than most WRs are conducive to fantasy points for TEs. Simply put, if they're on the field and not blocking, we should keep an eye on them. Nevertheless, their surroundings (e.g. QB play, WR depth) can also point us in the right direction.

→ Juwan Johnson
New Orleans Saints

If we can accept that a tight end's offensive environment isn't as important as earning targets, investing in the **S**aints' aerial attack doesn't sound so bad.

Yes, you're relying on **D**erek Carr, but Carr did have just two fewer top 12 finishes than **P**atrick Mahomes. And the former **R**aiders **QB** had more 300-yard passing games than Josh Allen. Just sayin'.

Anecdotally, Juwan Johnson's situation looks favorable. New Orleans let **WR** Michael Thomas speak kindly and hold a knife elsewhere, and former **S**aints OC **P**ete Carmichael Jr.'s exodus to **D**enver to again pair with HC **S**ean **P**ayton adds more smoke to the "Taysom Hill may be traded" fire.

With unproven A.T. **P**erry and **R**ashid **S**haheed flanking Chris Olave, Johnson has a clear path to consistent targets in 2024.

And with 59 targets last season, he already has showcased his ability to earn more work.

- **R**oute **R**ate **(**from Week 8**):** 63.5%, 2nd among all starting **S**aints pass catchers
- Target **S**hare: 14.9%, 2nd
- **TPRR:** 21.1%, 3rd
- Green-zone Target **S**hare: 15.8%, T-1st

Johnson returned from injury in Week 8 to a 54.8% route rate and just two targets. But his routes, air yards and looks from Carr steadily rose and culminated in a 12-target game for Johnson in the fantasy playoffs.

Johnson's growing workload even gave Taysom Hill's weekly package a run for its money. With a wider runway in '24, we shouldn't overlook Johnson's potential because of our apathy toward the **S**aints' offense.

→ Mike Gesicki
Cincinnati Bengals

Mike Gesicki falls into the sleeper category, as drafters force their eyelids to close when they see his name. Whether it's because of his horrific rendition of The Griddy or his inability to accrue more than 400 yards in a season since 2021, Gesicki has burned too many of us. But his situation looks brighter in 2024. It's easy to look at Gesicki's time in Miami as his best shot at being fantasy-relevant. However, the Bengals lean more heavily on their ancillary receiving options.

- **R**oute **R**ate **(**2022 **/** 2021**):** 56.9% **(**Hayden Hurst, 2022**),** 73.4% **(**C.J. Uzomah, 2021**)**
- Target **S**hare: 11.4%, 12.3%
- **TPRR:** 17.6%, 13.7%
- **R**ed-**Z**one **R**oute **R**ate: 51.5%, 82.4%

For both Hayden Hurst and C.J. Uzomah, who inarguably possess weaker athletic profiles, every metric is greater than Gesicki's over the last two years. It should be no surprise that a stint with Mac Jones would bog down anyone's stat lines, playing alongside Tyreek Hill and Jaylen Waddle didn't do Gesicki any favors, either. In 2022, Hill and Waddle accounted for 51.7% of the team's regular-season targets. Luckily, it's not as condensed in Cincinnati.

- Third-**/**Fourth-**D**own Target **S**hare: 23.5% **(**Tyler Boyd, 2023**),** 14.4% **(**Hurst, 2022**),** 10.6% **(**Uzomah, 2021**)**
- When **QB P**ressured Target **S**hare: 22.0%, 5.7%, 15.4%

I included Tyler Boyd in this sample because of his role in high-leverage situations. Even Irv **S**mith Jr.'s **TPRR (**11.1%**)** wasn't far from Gesicki's **(**13.3%**).** For Gesicki in 2024, it's less about the talent and more about the role. The Bengals have integrated the TEs, and Joe Burrow has targeted them in the areas of the field most conducive to fantasy points.

→ Los Angeles Chargers TEs

I'm specifically calling out L.A.'s TE group as a whole, but the primary beneficiaries are Will Dissly and Hayden Hurst. They have three things working in their favor.

First, the Chargers are retooling their offense. HC Jim Harbaugh and the front office spent just one of their first five picks on an offensive skill player after losing three starters via free agency. After Ladd McConkey, Justin Herbert has a cadre of fourth-round, seventh-round and UDFAs for support. A veteran TE would be a welcome sight to the fifth-year QB as his WRs learn the ropes.

Second, the Greg Roman of it all. The new Chargers OC's penchant for grinding out games on the ground is the headline, but his tendencies toward TE-friendly personnel packages — after spending time as a TE coach in 2002 and 2017 — are the subplot.

In 2022, with Mark Andrews and Isaiah Likely on the roster, Roman had the Ravens using two-TE sets at the seventh-highest rate. They sat at the league average in the same metric in 2018 when Andrews and Hurst were on the roster together. Combined with the lack of reliable WRs, expecting to see more of the TEs from a Greg Roman offense isn't outlandish.

Finally, let's look at the TEs the Chargers picked up. Hurst's familiarity with Roman already sets him up for success. Prior to HC Frank Reich's firing, Hurst was at a 51.1% route rate with a higher TPRR than DJ Chark. And Dissly's 0.64 EPA per target was the highest among Seattle's pass catchers in 2022.

Both operate inline or from the slot, offering the versatility and short-area efficiency Harbaugh envisions for the Chargers in 2024.

→ Ben Sinnott
Washington Commanders

Rookie TEs are typically tough to gauge. If they're not "glorified WRs" in college, we're less enthusiastic about their fantasy prospects as rookies. But with Sinnott, I can see a path to viability.

Let's start simple. Seeing a tight end run routes is an easy indicator of his utility in the passing game. For fantasy purposes, if I had to choose between a TE who primarily blocks or the one running around out there, I'd take the guy scrambling around.

Sinnott ran a route on at least 70.0% of Kansas State's team dropbacks in consecutive seasons (79.0%, 74.0%). Even better, he ended his collegiate career with a 20.1% target share. Sinnott had the second-most targets of any Wildcats pass-catcher in 2023. Granted, it's not like the team was laden with NFL stars, but the rest of Sinnott's peripheral stats compare well relative to his classmates.

- Air **Y**ard Share: 18.4% (2nd)
- Receiving **Y**ards per Team Pass Attempt: 1.04 (4th)
- Forced Missed Tackle Rate: 27.0% (2nd)
- **Y**ards after the Catch per Reception: 6.8 (3rd)

For 2024, Sinnott's primary competition in Washington is 33-year-old Zach Ertz, who did have a 19.4% target share in Arizona before injuries cut his season short. But Sinnott's pass-blocking skill set may get him the nod over the vet in time.

> JAKE FERGUSON

Talkin' Tight Ends

Breakout picks, Do Not Draft options, impact rookies and bold 2024 predictions

BY MATTHEW FREEDMAN, IAN HARTITZ & PETER OVERZET

Minefields abound at the tight end position for fantasy football, from the game's aging stars to the position's typically slow acclimation to the NFL. Still, after a string of disappointments from early-round tight ends in recent seasons, tight ends are coming off the board at a relative discount this year.

That doesn't mean choosing your path at TE is simple. That's why we've gathered three of Fantasy Life's top TE gurus to offer their insights on the tight end market and their bold predictions for the position in 2024.

Q: Which tight end are you higher on than the market and why?

→ **Jake Ferguson**
Dallas Cowboys

Last year, in his second season overall and first as the team's No. 1 TE, Ferguson was No. 1 at the position in end zone targets (12) and red zone targets (23), No. 3 in play-action targets (30) and No. 5 in routes (573). So Ferguson has already shown that he's capable of earning top-tier usage, and he could get even more of it in 2024 if he reasonably continues to improve in his third year.

Helping Ferguson are a few factors. First, the Cowboys last season were No. 1 in scoring (29.9 points per game), and they've been top-four in each of the past three years. They're likely to have one of the league's best offenses in 2024. Also, the

Cowboys could pass at a high rate given that their RB room is now once again led by the remains of Ezekiel Elliott.

Finally, the team has downgraded at No. 3 WR in moving from Michael Gallup to Jalen Tolbert, so Ferguson could build upon his 19% target rate and 17% target share from last year.

Often drafted as the TE10, Ferguson has a TE12 floor and TE3 ceiling.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN

→ Evan Engram Jacksonville Jaguars

Engram caught 114 of 143 (!) targets last season for 963 yards and four scores. If anything, the 29-year-old talent was a bit unlucky in the scoring department and therefore could be leaned on more in 2024 after Calvin Ridley took his talents to Nashville.

Jaguars HC Doug Pederson has a history of enabling high-end fantasy TEs in his seven years as a head coach:

- × 2016, Zach Ertz: TE3
- × 2017, Ertz: TE3
- × 2018, Ertz: TE2
- × 2019, Ertz: TE4
- × 2020, Dallas Goedert: TE9
- × 2022, Evan Engram: TE7
- × 2023, Engram: TE4

New additions Gabe Davis and Brian Thomas Jr. certainly will be plenty involved, but neither WR profiles as a candidate for the sort of underneath and intermediate targets that Engram (five-yard average target depth) lived on in 2023.

You don't need more than one hand to count the number of TEs with a realistic chance to lead their offense in total targets, yet you do need more than one hand to count the number of TEs likely to go ahead of Engram in fantasy drafts. Quite frankly, I don't get it.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Trey McBride Arizona Cardinals

Back in the day, you'd have to spend a second- or third-round pick on a TE who did what McBride did in 2023, yet he's regularly available in the fifth or sixth round of 2024 drafts.

What more does this guy have to do to earn some respect? He finished last season with 106 targets (sixth in the league), 81 receptions (fifth) and 825 yards (seventh). What's even crazier about those stats is that he didn't even become a full-time player in the offense until Week 8 because the team was still stubbornly using Zach Ertz. McBride's advanced stats are even more impressive. He had the highest targets per route run rate for TEs in the entire league (26%), which speaks to how much attention he commanded when he was on the field.

I know people are concerned about Marvin Harrison Jr. eating into his target share, but there's enough room for two alphas in this offense after the departure of Marquise Brown. If anything, the addition of Harrison should be a boon for McBride's fantasy prospects. He'll face fewer double-teams, and Arizona should enjoy even more trips to the red zone in 2024 with another elite playmaker in the offense.

— PETER OVERZET

Q: Which TE are you lower on than the market (i.e. a Do Not Draft player) and why?

→ Travis Kelce Kansas City Chiefs

I would never say something as stupid as, "Do not draft Kelce." But I might say something like, "It's probably OK to be underweight on a highly hyped TE who turns 35 years old in October and is coming off his least efficient NFL season."

The Chiefs are likely to bounce back this year, but in 2023 they were No. 15 in scoring (21.8 points per game), and there's a decent chance they won't jump all the way back into the top five. On top of that, Kelce could face the most target competition of his career, as Marquise Brown, Rashee Rice and Xavier Worthy constitute the best WR trio the Chiefs have had under HC Andy Reid.

With his advancing age and acceptable-but-not-exceptional

circumstances, Kelce still has the upside to finish as the TE1, but he no longer has the astronomical league-winning ceiling he once owned, and his fantasy floor is far lower than his TE3 average draft position, as there's no telling when his level of play will drastically fall off.

Again, Kelce shouldn't receive the full fade: He's still a top-three TE. But going light on him is a precautionary measure that's rightfully prudent, and he's certainly not a player to reach for in fantasy drafts.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN

→ T.J. Hockenson
Minnesota Vikings

Hockenson is entering his age-27 season and is coming off a regular season that featured career-high marks in receptions (95) and receiving yards (960) despite missing two games.

He would be in the top three conversation ... if it wasn't for his ACL tear on Christmas Eve.

Multiple doctors in the fantasy football community believe Hockenson could miss half of the 2024 season, followed by an overall performance dip until 2025. And that's before we factor in the reality that the offense isn't guaranteed to be nearly as productive with either J.J. McCarthy (a rookie) or Sam Darnold (a Sam Darnold) under center.

Don't hate the player, hate the ADP. Hockenson would be a fine enough later-round option with the potential to pay off in the second half of the season, but using a pick inside the top 10 rounds on someone not guaranteed to suit up before November doesn't seem too wise — and that's before considering the likelihood his efficiency and volume also decline.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ David Njoku
Cleveland Browns

Njoku was a revelation down the stretch in 2023. In Weeks 13 through 17, he averaged nearly nine targets per game. During that window, he scored four TDs and eclipsed 100 receiving yards twice.

And do you know who his QB was for those games? Yes, Joe Flacco.

And do you know who isn't going to be his QB in 2024? Yes again, Flacco.

The Browns, who have fallen victim to the classic "sunk cost fallacy" trap, plan to trot out Deshaun Watson again in 2024 despite Watson looking awful in limited action in both 2022 (79.1 QBR rating) and '23 (84.3 QBR rating).

Njoku's splits with Watson are concerning.

- × Per-Game Average with Watson (5 games): 5 targets, 4 catches, 35 yds
- × Per-Game Average without Watson (11 games): 9 targets, 6 catches, 64 yds

Further complicating things for Njoku: There's even more target competition this year with WR Jerry Jeudy in the fold.

Njoku is a talented player who has been able to thrive with Flacco at QB and when there is little target competition. Neither of those things will be true in 2024, making him an easy fade.

— PETER OVERZET

Q: What is your bold prediction for the TE position in 2024?

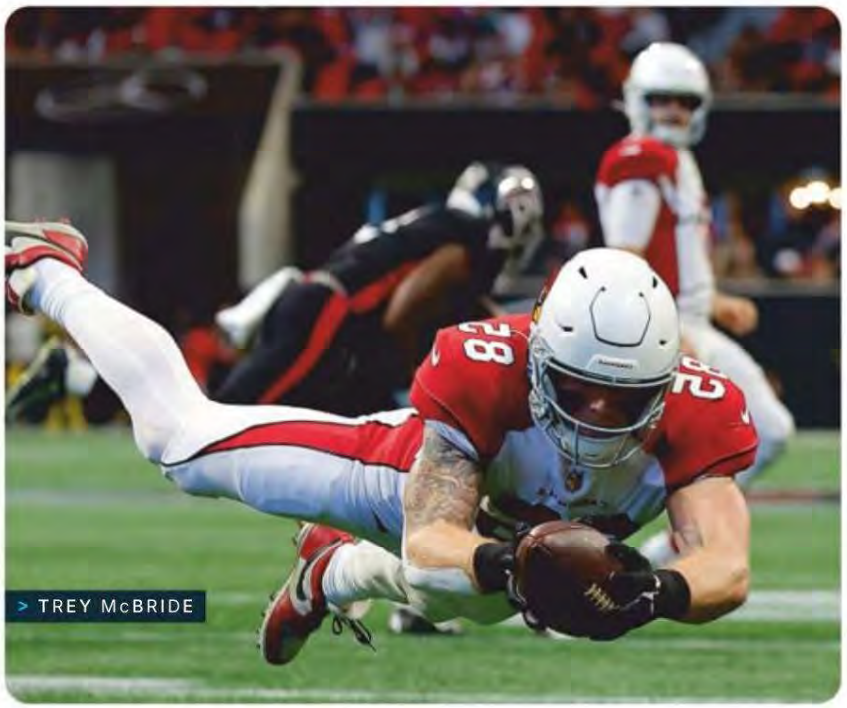
→ Bills' Dalton Kincaid set up for monster season

This offseason, the Bills parted ways with WRs Stefon Diggs and Gabe Davis and replaced them with Curtis Samuel and Keon Coleman. Samuel and Coleman both have upside, but the Bills have no proven No. 1 WR. So here's a bold prediction: In 2024, Kincaid will lead not only the Bills in receiving but also all TEs in the NFL.

Last year as a part-time player who split work with TE Dawson Knox, the rookie Kincaid had at least a 70% snap rate in just five games, but in those contests — despite playing alongside Diggs and Davis — he averaged 7.3 targets for 57.3 yards receiving per game. This year a 70% snap rate is likely to be Kincaid's weekly floor, he should be better equipped to earn targets in his second season and Samuel and Coleman aren't the target competitors that Diggs and Davis were.

As wild as this sounds, Kincaid has a legit chance to be the No. 1 pass catcher for QB Josh Allen, and that could put him in line for as many as 150 targets and 1,200 yards receiving, which would likely lead the position in 2024.

— MATTHEW FREEDMAN



> TREY McBRIDE

→ Raiders rookie Brock Bowers fails to post a top 15 finish among TEs

This doesn't mean Bowers won't have a great NFL career. After all, just three first-year TEs have produced TE1-level fantasy numbers (PPR) over the past 10 years. Kudos to 2017 Evan Engram, 2021 Kyle Pitts and 2023 Sam LaPorta, who were able to parlay their own God-given talent with triple-digit target workloads and veteran QBs capable of helping them produce.

Bowers certainly checks the talent box — it's everything else that's the problem. First, there's the simple matter of getting on the field. While it's admittedly fun to assume Bowers and Michael Mayer can be this generation's Rob Gronkowski/Aaron Hernandez (on the field), the Raiders ranked 27th in total plays with two-TE formations in 2023. And only the Dolphins (**49**) and Broncos (**60**) had fewer total targets to their TEs than the Raiders (70). It'd make sense if these variables change with the presence of Bowers, but both have a *long* way to go.

Let's say the Raiders feature Bowers in a near every-down role, and he also manages to earn triple-digit targets while working as the third banana to WRs Davante Adams and Jakobi Meyers. Are we supposed to feel optimistic about the upside of a passing game led by Gardner Minshew or Aidan O'Connell? These were the NFL's bottom-two QBs in completion percentage over expected last year.

— IAN HARTITZ

→ Elite TEs continue to dominate

Travis Kelce has long been a fixture in Round 1, and fellow TEs such as Mark Andrews, George Kittle and Darren Waller have been selected in Rounds 2 and 3 in recent seasons.

Yet for some reason, drafters are completely swearing off elite TEs in the early rounds in 2024, with none of them being taken in the first three rounds of most drafts.

This is a classic case of recency bias. In 2023, Kelce flopped in the fantasy regular season. Andrews didn't pay off his ADP. Kittle's production was sporadic. And Sam LaPorta, one of the few league-winners at the TE position, emerged from the double-digit rounds of fantasy drafts. But a single season is an incredibly small sample size, and the value of an elite TE on your fantasy team remains just as important as it always has.

I'm betting we get a resurgence from the elite TEs in 2024, and all of the best fantasy squads will feature at least one of these names: Sam LaPorta, Travis Kelce, Trey McBride, Mark Andrews, Dalton Kincaid, Kyle Pitts and George Kittle.

Best of all, you don't need to spend a premium pick on any of these guys. They'll be available in Rounds 4 and later, which allows you to load up on multiple elite WRs early (or a bell-cow RB) and still get a huge edge on your opponents at the TE position with a mid-round pick.

Try not to leave a draft without one of these guys; the elite TE cohort will never be this cheap again.

— PETER OVERZET

> T.J. HOCKENSON

TE Injury Report

Health issues surrounding fantasy-relevant tight ends to monitor as the season approaches

BY IAN HARTITZ

> SAD BUT TRUE: You can't score fantasy points without being on the field.

While we can't necessarily control for future injuries, we can do our best to evaluate existing issues to determine the overall fantasy impact. And by "we," I mean actual doctors who are kind enough to offer fantasy-specific expertise, such as:

- Edwin Porras DPT (@FBInjuryDoc)
- Jeff Mueller PT, DPT (@jmthrivept)
- Jesse Morse MD (@drjessemorse)
- Deepak Chona MD (@SportMDAnalysis)

With that, here are two key TE injuries to be concerned with ahead of the 2024 fantasy season.

→ Vikings TE T.J. Hockenson (right knee)

Hockenson was having the most productive season of his career before tearing both his ACL and MCL on Christmas Eve. His Jan. 29 surgery date won't help his chances of returning by Week 1.

Both Dr. Morse and Dr. Mueller believe Hockenson could miss half of the 2024 season, with an overall performance dip until 2025. Granted, Hockenson at 90% would still be better than most TEs — he and Travis Kelce were the top two players at the position in PPR points per game last season — but there's an added wild card here with the offense suddenly being led by Sam Darnold or a rookie QB.

BOTTOM LINE: Hockenson is expected to miss half the season and could struggle to provide his usual production after returning, making him a risk anywhere near the position's top 12 options.

> TYLER HIGBEE

→ Rams TE Tyler Higbee (right knee)

Like with Hockenson, the late-season nature of Higbee's torn ACL is the primary problem.

Dr. Mueller believes the 31-year-old veteran likely will miss half of the '24 season and could potentially return only as a rotational player. The Rams would take on more dead money ($7.6 million) than they would save against the cap ($4.5 million) by releasing Higbee at any point this offseason. Either way, he's not someone fantasy managers or Rams fans should expect to be contributing in a meaningful way until at least November. This makes backup TE Davis Allen an intriguing late-round dart in TE-premium or best ball formats.

BOTTOM LINE: Higbee has never been relied on as a meaningful pass-game contributor when the Rams have had healthy WRs. Don't expect a lesser version of him to emerge as anything more than a potential late-season waiver wire streamer next season.

FLEX RANKINGS

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
1	Christian McCaffrey	RB	49ers	RB1
2	CeeDee Lamb	WR	Cowboys	WR1
3	Tyreek Hill	WR	Dolphins	WR2
4	Breece Hall	RB	Jets	RB2
5	Ja'Marr Chase	WR	Bengals	WR3
6	Bijan Robinson	RB	Falcons	RB3
7	Amon-Ra St. Brown	WR	Lions	WR4
8	Justin Jefferson	WR	Vikings	WR5
9	Puka Nacua	WR	Rams	WR6
10	Garrett Wilson	WR	Jets	WR7
11	A.J. Brown	WR	Eagles	WR8
12	Jonathan Taylor	RB	Colts	RB4
13	Jahmyr Gibbs	RB	Lions	RB5
14	Drake London	WR	Falcons	WR9
15	Marvin Harrison Jr.	WR	Cardinals	WR10
16	Saquon Barkley	RB	Eagles	RB6
17	Davante Adams	WR	Raiders	WR11
18	De'Von Achane	RB	Dolphins	RB7
19	Kyren Williams	RB	Rams	RB8
20	Chris Olave	WR	Saints	WR12
21	Deebo Samuel	WR	49ers	WR13
22	Brandon Aiyuk	WR	49ers	WR14
23	Stefon Diggs	WR	Texans	WR15
24	Mike Evans	WR	Buccaneers	WR16
25	D.J. Moore	WR	Bears	WR17
26	Sam LaPorta	TE	Lions	TE1
27	Travis Kelce	TE	Chiefs	TE2
28	Josh Jacobs	RB	Packers	RB9
29	Jaylen Waddle	WR	Dolphins	WR18
30	Travis Etienne Jr.	RB	Jaguars	RB10
31	Derrick Henry	RB	Ravens	RB11
32	Michael Pittman Jr.	WR	Colts	WR19
33	Nico Collins	WR	Texans	WR20
34	Malik Nabers	WR	Giants	WR21
35	Cooper Kupp	WR	Rams	WR22
36	D.K. Metcalf	WR	Seahawks	WR23
37	Trey McBride	TE	Cardinals	TE3
38	Isiah Pacheco	RB	Chiefs	RB12
39	Rachaad White	RB	Buccaneers	RB13
40	Joe Mixon	RB	Texans	RB14
41	George Pickens	WR	Steelers	WR24
42	James Cook	RB	Bills	RB15
43	DeVonta Smith	WR	Eagles	WR25
44	Tank Dell	WR	Texans	WR26
45	Mark Andrews	TE	Ravens	TE4
46	Alvin Kamara	RB	Saints	RB16
47	Kenneth Walker III	RB	Seahawks	RB17
48	Zay Flowers	WR	Ravens	WR27
49	Tee Higgins	WR	Bengals	WR28
50	Amari Cooper	WR	Browns	WR29
51	Aaron Jones	RB	Vikings	RB18
52	Christian Kirk	WR	Jaguars	WR30
53	Dalton Kincaid	TE	Bills	TE5
54	James Conner	RB	Cardinals	RB19
55	Jayden Reed	WR	Packers	WR31
56	David Montgomery	RB	Lions	RB20
57	Keenan Allen	WR	Bears	WR32
58	Rhamondre Stevenson	RB	Patriots	RB21
59	Terry McLaurin	WR	Commanders	WR33
60	Marquise Brown	WR	Chiefs	WR34
61	Rashee Rice	WR	Chiefs	WR35
62	Zamir White	RB	Raiders	RB22
63	Xavier Worthy	WR	Chiefs	WR36
64	Kyle Pitts	TE	Falcons	TE6
65	George Kittle	TE	49ers	TE7
66	Rome Odunze	WR	Bears	WR37
67	D'Andre Swift	RB	Bears	RB23
68	Raheem Mostert	RB	Dolphins	RB24
69	Diontae Johnson	WR	Panthers	WR38
70	Tony Pollard	RB	Titans	RB25
71	DeAndre Hopkins	WR	Titans	WR39
72	Najee Harris	RB	Steelers	RB26
73	Jordan Addison	WR	Vikings	WR40
74	Brian Thomas Jr.	WR	Jaguars	WR41
75	Calvin Ridley	WR	Titans	WR42
76	Jaylen Warren	RB	Steelers	RB27
77	Evan Engram	TE	Jaguars	TE8
78	Javonte Williams	RB	Broncos	RB28
79	Ladd McConkey	WR	Chargers	WR43
80	Christian Watson	WR	Packers	WR44
81	Keon Coleman	WR	Bills	WR45
82	Jaxon Smith-Njigba	WR	Seahawks	WR46
83	Chris Godwin	WR	Buccaneers	WR47
84	Tyler Lockett	WR	Seahawks	WR48
85	Jonathon Brooks	RB	Panthers	RB29
86	Ezekiel Elliott	RB	Cowboys	RB30
87	Trey Benson	RB	Cardinals	RB31
88	Zack Moss	RB	Bengals	RB32
89	Jake Ferguson	TE	Cowboys	TE9
90	David Njoku	TE	Browns	TE10
91	Chase Brown	RB	Bengals	RB33
92	Devin Singletary	RB	Giants	RB34
93	Dallas Goedert	TE	Eagles	TE11
94	Brian Robinson Jr.	RB	Commanders	RB35
95	Curtis Samuel	WR	Bills	WR49
96	Brock Bowers	TE	Raiders	TE12
97	Austin Ekeler	RB	Commanders	RB36
98	Tyjae Spears	RB	Titans	RB37
99	Nick Chubb	RB	Browns	RB38
100	Gus Edwards	RB	Chargers	RB39
101	Josh Palmer	WR	Chargers	WR50
102	Khalil Shakir	WR	Bills	WR51
103	Blake Corum	RB	Rams	RB40
104	Courtland Sutton	WR	Broncos	WR52
105	Mike Williams	WR	Jets	WR53
106	Dalton Schultz	TE	Texans	TE13
107	T.J. Hockenson	TE	Vikings	TE14
108	Zach Charbonnet	RB	Seahawks	RB41

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
108	Zach Charbonnet	RB	Seahawks	RB41
109	Jerome Ford	RB	Browns	RB42
110	Jakobi Meyers	WR	Raiders	WR54
111	Romeo Doubs	WR	Packers	WR55
112	Pat Freiermuth	TE	Steelers	TE15
113	Rashid Shaheed	WR	Saints	WR56
114	Brandin Cooks	WR	Cowboys	WR57
115	Jameson Williams	WR	Lions	WR58
116	Cole Kmet	TE	Bears	TE16
117	Adonai Mitchell	WR	Colts	WR59
118	Adam Thielen	WR	Panthers	WR60
119	Jerry Jeudy	WR	Browns	WR61
120	Ja'Lynn Polk	WR	Patriots	WR62
121	Josh Downs	WR	Colts	WR63
122	Ray Davis	RB	Bills	RB43
123	Luke Musgrave	TE	Packers	TE17
124	Gabriel Davis	WR	Jaguars	WR64
125	Xavier Legette	WR	Panthers	WR65
126	Jermaine Burton	WR	Bengals	WR66
127	Malachi Corley	WR	Jets	WR67
128	Rico Dowdle	RB	Cowboys	RB44
129	Chuba Hubbard	RB	Panthers	RB45
130	Ty Chandler	RB	Vikings	RB46
131	J.K. Dobbins	RB	Chargers	RB47
132	Jahan Dotson	WR	Commanders	WR68
133	Tyler Allgeier	RB	Falcons	RB48
134	Darnell Mooney	WR	Falcons	WR69
135	Hunter Henry	TE	Patriots	TE18
136	Antonio Gibson	RB	Patriots	RB49
137	Kendre Miller	RB	Saints	RB50
138	Michael Wilson	WR	Cardinals	WR70
139	Roman Wilson	WR	Steelers	WR71
140	Ricky Pearsall	WR	49ers	WR72
141	Dontayvion Wicks	WR	Packers	WR73
142	Troy Franklin	WR	Broncos	WR74
143	Marvin Mims Jr.	WR	Broncos	WR75
144	Quentin Johnston	WR	Chargers	WR76
145	Demario Douglas	WR	Patriots	WR77
146	Wan'Dale Robinson	WR	Giants	WR78
147	Cade Otton	TE	Buccaneers	TE19
148	Rashod Bateman	WR	Ravens	WR79
149	Luke McCaffrey	WR	Commanders	WR80
150	Kimani Vidal	RB	Chargers	RB51
151	Javon Baker	WR	Patriots	WR81
152	Tyler Conklin	TE	Jets	TE20
153	Tyrone Tracy Jr.	RB	Giants	RB52
154	MarShawn Lloyd	RB	Packers	RB53
155	Bucky Irving	RB	Buccaneers	RB54
156	Jaylen Wright	RB	Dolphins	RB55
157	Roschon Johnson	RB	Bears	RB56
158	Khalil Herbert	RB	Bears	RB57
159	Demarcus Robinson	WR	Rams	WR82
160	Juwan Johnson	TE	Saints	TE21
161	Jaleel Mclaughlin	RB	Broncos	RB58
162	Elijah Moore	WR	Browns	WR83
163	Elijah Mitchell	RB	49ers	RB59
164	Will Shipley	RB	Eagles	RB60

RNK	PLAYER	POS.	TEAM	POSITION RANK
165	Jonnu Smith	TE	Dolphins	TE22
166	Chigoziem Okonkwo	TE	Titans	TE23
167	Ben Sinnott	TE	Commanders	TE24
168	Treylon Burks	WR	Titans	WR84
169	Braelon Allen	RB	Jets	RB61
170	Michael Mayer	TE	Raiders	TE25
171	Jalin Hyatt	WR	Giants	WR85
172	Kendrick Bourne	WR	Patriots	WR86
173	Greg Dortch	WR	Cardinals	WR87
174	Isaiah Likely	TE	Ravens	TE26
175	Rondale Moore	WR	Falcons	WR88
176	Kalif Raymond	WR	Lions	WR89
177	Keaton Mitchell	RB	Ravens	RB62
178	Isaac Guerendo	RB	49ers	RB63
179	Noah Fant	TE	Seahawks	TE27
180	Van Jefferson	WR	Steelers	WR90
181	Rasheen Ali	RB	Ravens	RB64
182	Dameon Pierce	RB	Texans	RB65
183	Ja'Tavion Sanders	TE	Panthers	TE28
184	Jonathan Mingo	WR	Panthers	WR91
185	Dylan Laube	RB	Raiders	RB66
186	Greg Dulcich	TE	Broncos	TE29
187	Clyde Edwards-Helaire	RB	Chiefs	RB67
188	Samaje Perine	RB	Broncos	RB68
189	Miles Sanders	RB	Panthers	RB69
190	Malik Washington	WR	Dolphins	WR92
191	Devontez Walker	WR	Ravens	WR93
192	Jelani Woods	TE	Colts	TE30
193	Theo Johnson	TE	Giants	TE31
194	Justice Hill	RB	Ravens	RB70
195	Alexander Mattison	RB	Raiders	RB71
196	D'Onta Foreman	RB	Browns	RB72
197	Kyle Philips	WR	Titans	WR94
198	Josh Reynolds	WR	Broncos	WR95
199	Nelson Agholor	WR	Ravens	WR96
200	Darren Waller	TE	Giants	TE32
201	Zach Ertz	TE	Commanders	TE33
202	Mike Gesicki	TE	Bengals	TE34
203	Deuce Vaughn	RB	Cowboys	RB73
204	Evan Hull	RB	Colts	RB74
205	Kenneth Gainwell	RB	Eagles	RB75
206	A.J. Dillon	RB	Packers	RB76
207	Tucker Kraft	TE	Packers	TE35
208	Gerald Everett	TE	Bears	TE36
209	Tank Bigsby	RB	Jaguars	RB77
210	Jamaal Williams	RB	Saints	RB78
211	Darius Slayton	WR	Giants	WR97
212	D'Ernest Johnson	RB	Jaguars	RB79
213	Jalen Tolbert	WR	Cowboys	WR98
214	Cordarrelle Patterson	RB	Steelers	RB80
215	Trey Palmer	WR	Buccaneers	WR99

> BROCK PURDY

Offensive Unit Rankings

Projected key contributors and thoughts for each offense, ordered best to worst

BY MATTHEW FREEDMAN

1) 49ers

- **Playcaller:** HC/OC Kyle Shanahan
- **QBs:** Brock Purdy, Josh Dobbs
- **RBs:** Christian McCaffrey, Elijah Mitchell, Isaac Guerendo, FB Kyle Juszczyk
- **WRs:** Deebo Samuel, Brandon Aiyuk, Ricky Pearsall, Jauan Jennings
- **TE:** George Kittle
- **OL:** LT Trent Williams, LG Aaron Banks, C Jake Brendel, RG Jon Feliciano, RT Colton McKivitz

> Last year the 49ers were No. 1 with 6.6 yards per play (YPP), 0.179 expected points added per play (EPA) and a 51.6% success rate (SR). This year they return the entire core of their offense and almost all of their offensive coaches. Game on.

2) Cowboys

- **Playcaller:** HC Mike McCarthy
- **OC:** Brian Schottenheimer
- **QBs:** Dak Prescott, Cooper Rush/Trey Lance
- **RBs:** Ezekiel Elliott, Rico Dowdle, Deuce Vaughn, FB Hunter Luepke
- **WRs:** CeeDee Lamb, Brandin Cooks, Jalen Tolbert
- **TE:** Jake Ferguson
- **OL:** LT Tyler Guyton, LG Tyler Smith, C Cooper Beebe, RG Zack Martin, RT Terence Steele

The Cowboys were No. 1 last year in points per game (29.9) as Prescott finished No. 2 in NFL MVP voting. But Guyton is raw and Beebe's shift to C is a projection. The Cowboys will produce, but their running game could disappoint.

3) Dolphins

- **Playcaller:** HC Mike McDaniel
- OC: Frank Smith
- **QBs:** Tua Tagovailoa, Mike White
- **RBs:** Raheem Mostert, De'Von Achane, Jaylen Wright, FB Alec Ingold
- **WRs:** Tyreek Hill, Jaylen Waddle, Braxton Berrios, Malik Washington
- **TEs:** Jonnu Smith, Durham Smythe
- **OL:** LT Terron Armstead, LG Isaiah Wynn, C Aaron Brewer, RG Robert Jones, RT Austin Jackson

Miami had top five marks in YPP (6.5), EPA (0.095) and SR (47.4%) last year. The interior OL could be vulnerable, but McDaniel effectively game-plans around weaknesses.

4) Ravens

- **Playcaller:** OC Todd Monken
- **QBs:** Lamar Jackson, Josh Johnson
- **RBs:** Derrick Henry, Keaton Mitchell, FB Patrick Ricard
- **WRs:** Zay Flowers, Rashod Bateman, Nelson Agholor, Devontez Walker
- **TEs:** Mark Andrews, Isaiah Likely
- **OL:** LT Ronnie Stanley, LG Andrew Vorhees, C Tyler Linderbaum, RG Ben Cleveland, RT Roger Rosengarten

The Ravens lost RT Morgan Moses, LG John Simpson and RG Kevin Zeitler, and they always seem to be in need of more pass catchers. But as long as Jackson, Henry and Andrews remain healthy, this offense should truck.

5) Lions

- **Playcaller:** OC Ben Johnson
- **QBs:** Jared Goff, Hendon Hooker
- **RBs:** Jahmyr Gibbs, David Montgomery
- **WRs:** Amon-Ra St. Brown, Jameson Williams, Kalif Raymond
- **TE:** Sam LaPorta
- **OL:** LT Taylor Decker, LG Graham Glasgow, C Frank Ragnow, RG Halapoulivaati Vaitai, RT Penei Sewell

The Lions have been top-five in YPP (5.9, 5.9) in two seasons with Johnson as the coordinator, they're loaded with young skill talent (Gibbs, St. Brown, Williams, LaPorta), and they possess one of the league's best OLs. As good as they were last year, they might be better this year.

6) Chiefs

- **Playcaller:** HC Andy Reid
- OC: Matt Nagy
- **QBs:** Patrick Mahomes, Carson Wentz
- **RBs:** Isiah Pacheco, Clyde Edwards-Helaire
- **WRs:** Marquise Brown, Rashee Rice, Xavier Worthy, Justin Watson
- **TEs:** Travis Kelce, Noah Gray
- **OL:** LT Kingsley Suamataia, LG Joe Thuney, C Creed Humphrey, RG Trey Smith, RT Jawaan Taylor

The Chiefs disappointed last year (No. 15 with 21.8 PPG), but they still have perhaps the best play-caller/QB combo in league history, and they upgraded WR. An offense with Mahomes is more likely to outperform than not.

7) Bills

- **Playcaller:** OC Joe Brady
- **QBs:** Josh Allen, Mitchell Trubisky
- **RBs:** James Cook, Ray Davis, Ty Johnson
- **WRs:** Keon Coleman, Curtis Samuel, Khalil Shakir
- **TEs:** Dalton Kincaid, Dawson Knox
- **OL:** LT Dion Dawkins, LG David Edwards, C Connor McGovern, RG O'Cyrus Torrence, RT Spencer Brown

The Bills parted ways with WRs Stefon Diggs and Gabe Davis this offseason, but they still have one of the league's best QBs, strong OL continuity and four potential emerging playmakers (Cook, Kincaid, Coleman, Shakir). The burden will be on Brady to maximize Allen's potential.

8) Eagles

- **Playcaller:** OC Kellen Moore
- **QBs:** Jalen Hurts, Kenny Pickett
- **RBs:** Saquon Barkley, Kenneth Gainwell, Will Shipley
- **WRs:** A.J. Brown, DeVonta Smith, DeVante Parker, Ainias Smith, Johnny Wilson
- **TE:** Dallas Goedert
- **OL:** LT Jordan Mailata, LG Landon Dickerson, C Cam Jurgens, RG Tyler Steen, RT Lane Johnson

Franchise C Jason Kelce to retired, and they enter this season with their fifth play-caller in five years, but the OL is stable and they sport arguably the league's best skill quintet (Hurts, Barkley, Brown, Smith, Goedert). The Eagles might not return to their 2022 form (No. 2 EPA, 0.114), but they probably will be better than they were in 2023 (No. 9 EPA, 0.051).

9) Rams

- **Playcaller** HC Sean McVay
- OC: Mike LaFleur
- **QBs:** Matthew Stafford, Stetson Bennett
- **RBs:** Kyren Williams, Blake Corum
- **WRs:** Puka Nacua, Cooper Kupp, Demarcus Robinson, Tutu Atwell
- **TEs:** Tyler Higbee, Colby Parkinson
- **OL:** LT Alaric Jackson, LG Jonah Jackson, C Steve Avila, LG Kevin Dotson, RT Rob Havenstein

In their two years with a healthy Stafford (2021, '23), they've been No. 8 in offensive EPA (0.067, 0.053). With the dynamic trio of Nacua, Kupp and Williams, McVay should be able to McMastermind yet another productive year provided Stafford stays healthy.

10) Bengals

- **Playcaller** HC Zac Taylor
- OC: Dan Pitcher
- **QBs:** Joe Burrow, Jake Browning
- **RBs:** Zack Moss, Chase Brown
- **WRs:** Ja'Marr Chase, Tee Higgins, Jermaine Burton, Trent Irwin, Andrei Iosivas, Charlie Jones
- **TEs:** Mike Gesicki, Erick All
- **OL:** LT Orlando Brown, LG Cordell Volson, C Ted Karras, RG Alex Cappa, RT Trent Brown

Injuries to Burrow (calf, wrist) plagued the team's 2023 campaign, but in 2022, the Bengals were No. 4 in EPA (0.085). They upgraded RT, TE and arguably RB, and they fortified the OL in Round 1 with backup OT Amarius Mims.

11) Texans

- **Playcaller** OC Bobby Slowik
- **QBs:** C.J. Stroud, Davis Mills
- **RBs:** Joe Mixon, Dameon Pierce, FB Andrew Beck
- **WRs:** Stefon Diggs, Nico Collins, Tank Dell, Robert Woods, Noah Brown, John Metchie
- **TEs:** Dalton Schultz, Brevin Jordan
- **OL:** LT Laremy Tunsil, LG Tytus Howard, C Juice Scruggs, RG Shaq Mason, RT Blake Fisher

One all-time great rookie campaign does not a Hall of Famer make, but Stroud looked like a franchise savior in 2023. The Texans should benefit from coordinator continuity with Slowik. As long as their interior O-line holds up, Houston should improve upon last year's No. 13 finish in YPP (5.4) and PPG (22.2).

12) Packers

- **Playcaller** HC Matt LaFleur
- OC: Adam Stenavich
- **QBs:** Jordan Love, Sean Clifford
- **RBs:** Josh Jacobs, A.J. Dillon, MarShawn Lloyd
- **WRs:** Christian Watson, Jayden Reed, Romeo Doubs, Dontayvion Wicks, Bo Melton
- **TEs:** Luke Musgrave, Tucker Kraft
- **OL:** LT Rasheed Walker, LG Elgton Jenkins, C Josh Myers, RG Jordan Morgan, RT Zach Tom

Jacobs might be a downgrade from Aaron Jones, and the O-line could still use some upgrades, but Love and his slew of emerging pass catchers provide the Pack with an elevated floor and vaulted ceiling.

13) Jets

- **Playcaller** OC Nathaniel Hackett
- **QBs:** Aaron Rodgers, Tyrod Taylor
- **RBs:** Breece Hall, Braelon Allen, Israel Abanikanda, FB Nick Bawden
- **WRs:** Garrett Wilson, Mike Williams, Allen Lazard, Malachi Corley, Xavier Gipson
- **TEs:** Tyler Conklin, Jeremy Ruckert
- **OL:** LT Tyron Smith, LG John Simpson, C Joe Tippmann, RG Alijah Vera-Tucker, RT Morgan Moses

With Rodgers, the Jets could have a top five offense. At the same time, what are the odds Hackett learns how to call plays, Smith and Moses (both 33) stay healthy and the recovering Williams (knee) and Vera-Tucker (Achilles) don't suffer injuries?

14) Browns

- **Playcaller** HC Kevin Stefanski
- OC: Ken Dorsey
- **QBs:** Deshaun Watson, Jameis Winston, Tyler Huntley
- **RBs:** Nick Chubb, Jerome Ford, D'Onta Foreman
- **WRs:** Amari Cooper, Jerry Jeudy, Elijah Moore, Cedric Tillman
- **TEs:** David Njoku, Jordan Akins
- **OL:** LT Jedrick Wills, LG Joel Bitonio, C Ethan Pocic, RG Wyatt Teller, RT Jack Conklin

With a two-time Coach of the Year (2020, '23), the Browns have maintained a league-average offense over the past two seasons despite poor QB performance. Watson has played just 12 games since joining the team, but the Browns should still be serviceable on offense thanks to their skill players and beastly O-line.

15) Falcons

- **Playcaller** OC Zac Robinson
- **QBs:** Kirk Cousins, Michael Penix Jr.
- **RBs:** Bijan Robinson, Tyler Allgeier
- **WRs:** Drake London, Darnell Mooney, Rondale Moore
- **TE:** Kyle Pitts
- **OL:** LT Jake Matthews, LG Matthew Bergeron, C Drew Dalman, RG Chris Lindstrom, RT Kaleb McGary

Robinson is a first-time play-caller, but he spent a half decade with McVay as an assistant. He has potential and also has weapons and a near-elite O-line returning all five starters. The unit would have benefited more this year if the team had used its Round 1 pick on someone likely to play right away (instead of a backup QB), and the offense might need time to coalesce, but it should be solid.

16) Bears

- **Playcaller** OC Shane Waldron
- **QBs:** Caleb Williams, Tyson Bagent
- **RBs:** D'Andre Swift, Khalil Herbert, Roschon Johnson
- **WRs:** D.J. Moore, Keenan Allen, Rome Odunze
- **TEs:** Cole Kmet, Gerald Everett
- **OL:** LT Braxton Jones, LG Teven Jenkins, C Ryan Bates, RG Nate Davis, RT Darnell Wright

The Bears have a Heisman-winning dual-threat rookie QB, a strong supporting cast of skill players, a sufficient OL and the play-caller who revived Geno Smith's career in Seattle. There likely will be a transitional period, but the Bears could positively surprise in 2023.

17) Colts

- **Playcaller** HC Shane Steichen
- **OC:** Jim Bob Cooter
- **QBs:** Anthony Richardson, Joe Flacco
- **RBs:** Jonathan Taylor, Trey Sermon, Evan Hull
- **WRs:** Michael Pittman Jr., Josh Downs, Adonai Mitchell, Alec Pierce
- **TEs:** Jelani Woods, Kylen Granson, Mo Alie-Cox
- **OL:** LT Bernhard Raimann, LG Quenton Nelson, C Ryan Kelly, RG Will Fries, RT Braden Smith

The offense returns all of its starters and coaches, so Steichen's unit could improve upon last year's No. 14 finish in YPP (5.2). Entering Year 2, Steichen has one question to answer: Is the intriguing Richardson ready to become a franchise QB?

18) Jaguars

- **Playcaller** OC Press Taylor
- **QBs:** Trevor Lawrence, Mac Jones
- **RBs:** Travis Etienne Jr., D'Ernest Johnson, Tank Bigsby
- **WRs:** Christian Kirk, Brian Thomas Jr., Gabe Davis, Zay Jones
- **TEs:** Evan Engram, Brenton Strange, Luke Farrell
- **OL:** LT Cam Robinson, LG Ezra Cleveland, C Mitch Morse, RT Brandon Scherff, RT Anton Harrison

The Jaguars regressed in 2023, dropping from No. 7 in EPA (0.043) the year prior to No. 19 (-0.032) as Taylor took play-calling duties. They could bounce back: Taylor has more experience, Lawrence still has "promised prince" upside and the team has a solidified OL and added Thomas in Round 1.

19) Seahawks

- **Playcaller** OC Ryan Grubb
- **QBs:** Geno Smith, Sam Howell
- **RBs:** Kenneth Walker III, Zach Charbonnet
- **WRs:** D.K. Metcalf, Tyler Lockett, Jaxon Smith-Njigba
- **TEs:** Noah Fant, Pharaoh Brown
- **OL:** LT Charles Cross, LG Laken Tomlinson, C Nick Harris, RG Christian Haynes, RT Abraham Lucas

The Seahawks were No. 10 in EPA (0.031) and SR (44.6%) last year, but that was with a different OC. The team has a borderline top 10 skill cohort, but the OL is vulnerable (especially on the interior), the new OC has never coached (much less called plays) in the NFL, and his boss is a first-year defensive-minded HC (Mike Macdonald). There's upside, but it might be outweighed by downside.

20) Cardinals

- **Playcaller** OC Drew Petzing
- **QBs:** Kyler Murray, Desmond Ridder
- **RBs:** James Conner, Trey Benson
- **WRs:** Marvin Harrison Jr., Michael Wilson, Greg Dortch, Zach Pascal
- **TEs:** Trey McBride, Tip Reiman
- **OL:** LT Paris Johnson, LG Elijah Wilkinson, C Hjalte Froholdt, RG Will Hernandez, RT Jonah Williams

Once Murray (knee) returned to action last year, the Cardinals were encouragingly No. 9 in EPA (0.046) in their final eight games. The OL is a liability but at least it has continuity, and the skill group boasts a three-down veteran RB, a generational WR prospect and a breakout TE.

21) Vikings

- **Playcaller** HC Kevin O'Connell
- OC: Wes Phillips
- **QB**s: J.J. McCarthy, Sam Darnold
- **RB**s: Aaron Jones, Ty Chandler
- **WR**s: Justin Jefferson, Jordan Addison, Brandon Powell, Trent Sherfield
- TEs: T.J. Hockenson, Josh Oliver
- OL: LT Christian Darrisaw, LG Blake Brandel, C Garrett Bradbury, RG Ed Ingram, RT Brian O'Neill

The Vikings finished No. 11 in YPP (5.5) in both of O'Connell's seasons. They have the league's best WR, a stable O-line and an upgraded RB. But they don't have Kirk Cousins; McCarthy has potential, but he didn't throw often in college.

22) Chargers

- **Playcaller** OC Greg Roman
- **QB**s: Justin Herbert, Easton Stick
- **RB**s: Gus Edwards, J.K. Dobbins, Isaiah Spiller, FB Ben Mason
- **WR**s: Ladd McConkey, Josh Palmer, Quentin Johnston
- TEs: Hayden Hurst, Will Dissly
- OL: LT Rashawn Slater, LG Zion Johnson, C Bradley Bozeman, RG Jamaree Salyer, RT Joe Alt

The Chargers parted ways with their top weapons, but they still have a top-eight QB and an O-line bookended by a Pro Bowl LT and Round 1 RT. HC Jim Harbaugh and Roman have had success everywhere they've been, but their run-heavy inclinations could make Herbert a glorified game manager.

23) Buccaneers

- **Playcaller** OC Liam Coen
- **QB**s: Baker Mayfield, Kyle Trask
- **RB**s: Rachaad White, Bucky Irving, Chase Edmonds
- **WR**s: Mike Evans, Chris Godwin, Jalen McMillan, Trey Palmer
- TE: Cade Otton
- OL: LT Tristan Wirfs, LG Sua Opeta, C Graham Barton, RG Cody Mauch, RT Luke Goedeke

The Bucs were No. 12 in EPA (0.020) last year as Mayfield enjoyed a career renaissance (4,044 yards passing), and they return nine offensive starters. But gone is OC Dave Canales (along with half his offensive staff), Coen, who lasted just one (terrible) year as Sean McVay's OC (2022), has never called plays in the NFL.

24) Saints

- **Playcaller** OC Klint Kubiak
- **QB**s: Derek Carr, Jake Haener
- **RB**s: Alvin Kamara, Jamaal Williams, Kendre Miller
- **WR**s: Chris Olave, Rashid Shaheed, A.T. Perry, Cedrick Wilson
- TEs: Juwan Johnson, Taysom Hill, Foster Moreau
- OL: LT Taliese Fuaga, LG Trevor Penning, C Erik McCoy, RG Cesar Ruiz, RT Ryan Ramczyk

The Saints likely upgraded OC in adding Kubiak (2023 49ers pass-game coordinator), and the team has a tantalizing collection of skilled playmakers, but Carr is now on his fourth play-caller in four years, and the O-line is vulnerable. The Saints were No. 19 last year in YPP (5.1).

25) Broncos

- **Playcaller** HC Sean Payton
- OC: Joe Lombardi
- **QB**s: Bo Nix, Jarrett Stidham
- **RB**s: Javonte Williams, Samaje Perine, Jaleel McLaughlin
- **WR**s: Courtland Sutton, Marvin Mims Jr., Troy Franklin, Tim Patrick, Josh Reynolds
- TEs: Adam Trautman, Greg Dulcich
- OL: LT Garett Bolles, LG Ben Powers, C Sam Mustipher, RG Quinn Meinerz, RT Mike McGlinchey

The Broncos were No. 15 in SR (42.3%) last year, and even without a proven starting NFL QB Payton and company likely will exceed expectations this year: His record against the spread without QBs Drew Brees and Russell Wilson is 19–12, and his rookie QB has an acceptable supporting cast.

26) Steelers

- **Playcaller** OC Arthur Smith
- **QB**s: Russell Wilson, Justin Fields
- **RB**s: Najee Harris, Jaylen Warren, Cordarrelle Patterson
- **WR**s: George Pickens, Roman Wilson, Van Jefferson
- TEs: Pat Freiermuth, Connor Heyward, Darnell Washington
- OL: LT Troy Fautanu, LG Isaac Seumalo, C Zach Frazier, RG James Daniels, RT Broderick Jones

This offseason, the Steelers traded two nickels for 10 pennies by replacing OC Matt Canada and QB Kenny Pickett with Smith and Wilson. Vanilla tastes vanilla. The team drastically improved the O-line in the draft, and Smith's run-heavy scheme (as we saw with the 2021-23 Falcons) will theoretically "protect" (hide?) his QB, but it could also hinder the offense.

27) Panthers

- **Playcaller** HC Dave Canales
- **OC:** Brad Idzik
- **QBs:** Bryce Young, Andy Dalton
- **RBs:** Jonathon Brooks, Chuba Hubbard, Miles Sanders
- **WRs:** Diontae Johnson, Adam Thielen, Xavier Legette, Jonathan Mingo
- **TE:** Tommy Tremble, Ja'Tavion Sanders, Ian Thomas
- **OL:** LT Ikem Ekwonu, LG Damien Lewis, C Austin Corbett, RG Robert Hunt, RT Taylor Moton

The Panthers were dead last in **YPP** (4.1) and **PPG** (13.**9**) **last** season, but they should improve this **year. As** the 2022 **Seahawks QBs coach** and 2023 **Buccaneers OC**, Canales invigorated Geno Smith and Baker Mayfield: Maybe he can do the **same** with Young.

28) Commanders

- **Playcaller OC** Kliff Kingsbury
- **QBs:** Jayden Daniels, Marcus Mariota
- **RBs:** Brian Robinson Jr., Austin Ekeler
- **WRs:** Terry McLaurin, Jahan Dotson, Luke McCaffrey, Olamide Zaccheaus
- **TE:** Zach Ertz, Ben Sinnott
- **OL:** LT Cornelius Lucas, LG Nick Allegretti, C Tyler Biadasz, RG Sam Cosmi, RT Andrew Wylie

The Commanders now have a **league-average OC**, O-line and **skill-position group. The problem is they have a rookie QB**, a new scheme, a new play-caller and as **many as six new offensive starters.** The Commanders have little continuity and no guarantee that Daniels **will excel** in Kingsbury's **system.**

29) Titans

- **Playcaller** HC Brian Callahan
- **OC:** Nick Holz
- **QBs:** Will Levis, Mason Rudolph, Malik Willis
- **RBs:** Tony Pollard, Tyjae Spears
- **WRs:** DeAndre Hopkins, Calvin Ridley, Nick Westbrook-Ikhine, Treylon Burks, Kyle Philips
- **TE:** Chigoziem Okonkwo, Josh Whyle
- **OL:** LT J.C. Latham, LG Peter Skoronski, C Lloyd Cushenberry, RG Daniel Brunskill, RT Nicholas Petit-Frere

Callahan, who has never called plays in the NFL, has an unproven **QB and shaky O-line. OL coach Bill Callahan (Brian's father) regularly** maximizes his units and Hopkins **and Ridley are** 1,000-**yard WRs.**

30) Giants

- **Playcaller OC** Mike Kafka
- **QBs:** Daniel Jones, Drew Lock
- **RBs:** Devin Singletary, Tyrone Tracy Jr., Eric Gray, Gary Brightwell
- **WRs:** Malik Nabers, Wan'Dale Robinson, Jalin Hyatt, Darius Slayton
- **TE:** Darren Waller, Daniel Bellinger, Theo Johnson
- **OL:** LT Andrew Thomas, LG Aaron Stinnie, C John Michael Schmitz, RG Jon Runyan, RT Jermaine Eluemunor

Brian Daboll **doesn't call plays**, but the system is still his, and last year it was bottom-three in YPP (4.5), **PPG** (15.6), **EPA** (-0.165) **and SR** (38.2%). **His starting QB was injured for most of 2023**, but Jones **didn't play well when healthy.**

31) Raiders

- **Playcaller OC** Luke Getsy
- **QBs:** Gardner Minshew, Aidan O'Connell
- **RBs:** Zamir White, Alexander Mattison, Ameer Abdullah, Dylan Laube
- **WRs:** Davante Adams, Jakobi Meyers, Tre Tucker
- **TE:** Brock Bowers, Michael Mayer, Harrison Bryant
- **OL:** LT Kolton Miller, LG Dylan Parham, C Andre James, RG Jackson Powers-Johnson, RT Thayer Munford

The Raiders aren't destitute. Getsy is new to the team, but at least he has two years of play-calling experience, **and his 2022-23 Bears offenses were only slightly subpar. White** impressed last year with his limited **opportunities. Adams and Meyers are a strong WR** duo. **Bowers and Mayer are an** intriguing **TE combo.**

32) Patriots

- **Playcaller OC** Alex Van Pelt
- **QBs:** Drake Maye, Jacoby Brissett
- **RBs:** Rhamondre Stevenson, Antonio Gibson
- **WRs:** DeMario Douglas, Ja'Lynn Polk, Kendrick Bourne, K.J. Osborn, Javon Baker, JuJu Smith-Schuster
- **TE:** Hunter Henry, Austin Hooper
- **OL:** LT Conor McDermott, LG Cole Strange, C David Andrews, RG Sidy Sow, RT Michael Onwenu

Gone is the gray hoodie of Bill Belichick, but the talent-deficient roster **remains. Despite entering his 20th coaching season**, Van **Pelt has called plays just once (2009). The Patriots** will probably have a run-heavy offense led and coordinated by an unimaginative **play-caller.**

Overreaction Monday: 2024 season preview

What to expect from C.J. Stroud in Year 2, Chargers under Jim Harbaugh

BY KENDALL VALENZUELA

WE'RE HUMANS who play fantasy football, so we're prone to overreacting. This is especially true throughout the long and torturous offseason, the nightmare that is a multi-month stretch without football.

What do we do to pass the time? We overreact. Whether they're bold takes in response to what we saw last year or overreacting to news that will affect the upcoming season ... there's no better time to overreact than now.

So, let's overreact together.

→ C.J. Stroud will follow up Offensive Rookie of the Year Award with MVP

How can you really overreact after C.J. Stroud's phenomenal rookie season?

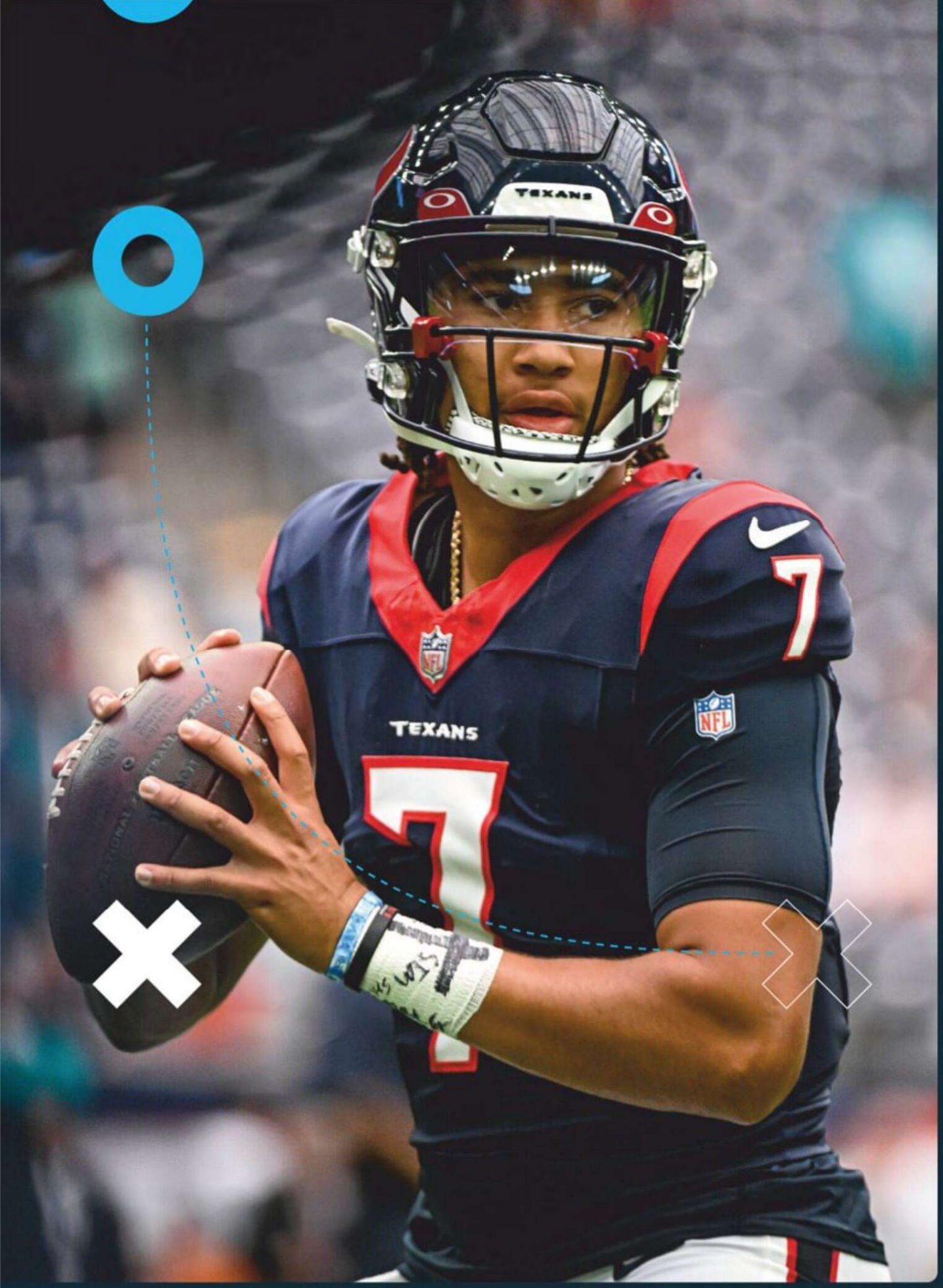
You project his sophomore season will be even bigger.

After becoming the first Houston Texan to win the Offensive Rookie of the Year award and breaking numerous records, last season was not just a flash in the pan for Stroud. As for this season, let's start with the underrated good: Head coach DeMeco Ryans kept most of the coaching staff in place, which is a win already. Offensive coordinator Bobby Slowik was a hot head coach candidate this offseason but decided to stay with the Texans under a new reworked contract. And Slowik wasn't the only piece vital to Stroud's success who decided to return — quarterbacks coach Jerrod Johnson also remains in Houston after a handful of offensive coordinator interviews. So we can check off the coaching boxes. Now let's get to the fun part...

> Expectations are sky-high for Stroud after a historic rookie year

The Texans are trying to maximize Stroud's rookie contract, and in doing so they traded for star receiver Stefon Diggs. While Diggs did not live up to his price tag last season, there are plenty of reasons to believe this change of scenery will lead to a big 2024 campaign. In Weeks 1-9, he operated as the fantasy WR3 and held down a 76% route participation with 834 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. Diggs turned 30 in November, but it's worth noting that in the first six games of the season, he was averaging career-high marks in both receptions per game (7.9) and yards per game (96.9).

Then his production took a nosedive. From Week 10 to the end of the regular season, he averaged 9.75 PPR points per game and finished inside the top 15 only once. There were rumors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that his relationship with quarterback Josh Allen was broken, and the team's move to fire offensive coordinator Ken Dorsey and replace him with Joe Brady didn't exactly help his production.

Overall, I'm a big believer in players getting the chance to wipe the slate clean with a change of scenery. It was obvious Diggs was unhappy in Buffalo, but I don't believe it will carry over to his new team. How can he be upset about landing on this roster?!

In this Texans offense, he may not be the center of attention given they also have Nico Collins and Tank Dell, but he will be a higher priority in Houston than he was in Buffalo last season.

One area in which the Texans fell short during the 2023 season was on the ground. Their running backs scored only seven touchdowns, had a 23.8% success rate inside the five-yard line and were virtually last in every rushing metric. But the organization went out and addressed the RB position as well.

Signing Joe Mixon, who will be **28** when the season begins, gives the team an experienced player who rushed for 1,034 yards and nine touchdowns last season with the Bengals. He also posted 346 receiving yards and three receiving TDs. In some cases, leaving a high-powered offense like Cincinnati's would result in a downgrade, but the Texans lost Devin Singletary and the only other competition is Dameon Pierce, who has been disappointing.

Mixon will upgrade this backfield and help stabilize a previously shaky facet of the team. If Houston can have an effective run game, it will unlock another part of Slowik's offense. This needs to happen for the Texans to take the next step, and I believe the addition of Mixon will do this — yet another positive for Stroud.

If Houston can have an effective run game, it will unlock another part of Slowik's offense; this needs to happen for the Texans to take the next step

Ultimately, Stroud threw for 4,108 yards, led the league in TD/INT ratio (23 to 5) and finished the 2023 fantasy season as the QB11 with 280.5 PPR points. Nothing big was taken away from him, and the team had a few big additions. His OC and QBs coach are back, he has an enviable wide receiver trio and he'll be coming off the highs of last year wanting more. As such, I believe he'll add NFL MVP honors to his laundry list of accomplishments.

→ Risk does not outweigh reward with Chargers

This could be a "choose your own adventure" kind of fantasy season for the Chargers. On one hand, new head coach Jim Harbaugh has a winning pedigree and the team needed a change after a disappointing 2023 season under then head coach Brandon Staley. On the other hand, the offensive turnover they had leaves us questioning whether there's enough talent left for a new coach to make the team fantasy-relevant. Harbaugh is a winner, but will wins translate to fantasy success?

There's value in the current Chargers players, perhaps enough to fool us into believing they can outperform their current ADP. But let me be clear: I couldn't draft anyone on this team and feel good about it afterward.

And, yes, I'm aware they have Justin (freaking) Herbert. He's one of the best quarterbacks in the NFL, having finished as QB7, QB2, QB15 and QB10 in fantasy points per game in his young career.

His 2023 season was cut short, as he had surgery to repair the broken index finger on his right hand with four games remaining. In one-QB leagues, you need to draft someone with a more positive fantasy outlook — heavily counting on Herbert to produce could be a disaster. He is a fine No. 2 quarterback option in superflex leagues, but make sure you don't pay a high premium for a current QB16.

Something else to make clear: I don't believe Harbaugh's arrival automatically means this team

> Harbaugh returns to the NFL after nine seasons at Michigan

> Justin Herbert has flashed MVP-level play, but will be light on weapons in 2024

is going to break the rushing attempts record and that Herbert will simply have no value. But Harbaugh and new offensive coordinator Greg Roman are known for their run-heavy offensive scheme. In fact, let's travel back in time for a moment...

Roman was the offensive coordinator for the 49ers when Harbaugh was the head coach, and under Roman (2011–14), San Francisco had the second-highest rush rate in the NFL, one of only two teams to run the ball more than 50% of the time. In his two years as offensive coordinator for the Bills (2015-2016), Buffalo had the highest rush rate in the NFL, and with the Ravens (2019-2022), his offense had the most rush attempts and were the only team to have a rush rate over 50%.

So, yeah, they're going to run the damn ball. Herbert will be ranked somewhere around the QB16 range, and a path inside the top eight is hard to imagine this season. Harbaugh is a winner and has proven he can develop quarterbacks, but with this WR room consisting of Joshua Palmer, Quentin Johnston and Ladd McConkey, I'm less optimistic for their 2024 outlook.

The Chargers desperately needed wide receiver help after losing Mike Williams and Keenan Allen, so they drafted McConkey with the **3**4th pick in this year's NFL Draft.

The team believes McConkey can play both in the slot and outside. According to Dwain McFarland's Rookie Super Model, McConkey was one of the best wide receivers in the class against zone with a 25% TPRR and the best yards per route run (YPRR) at **3**.05. The NFL plays zone 70% of the time and McConkey was described as a "zone monster," so he has legit WR1 potential on this team.

> Here is the current Average Draft Position for each fantasy-relevant Charger:

- Justin Herbert: QB16 (11**8** ADP)
- Joshua Palmer: WR61 (1**3**4 ADP)
- Ladd McConkey: WR55 (11**3** ADP)
- Quentin Johnston: WR66 (145 ADP)
- Gus Edwards: RB**38** (127 ADP)
- J.K. Dobbins: RB5**3** (17**8** ADP)

I'm optimistic the Chargers will once again reign supreme in fantasy football, but I won't go out of my way to draft them this season. I'll potentially target Herbert as a second QB in superflex leagues and will take shots on McConkey as long as his price tag isn't steep. Running back Gus Edwards knows Roman's system and played well with him in seasons prior, so he's also a player I'll add (if he falls to me), hoping he's used in a role similar to when he played with the Ravens.

These players are already discounted, but sometimes we don't need to dive deep into why. There's no reading between the lines here. I want to win my fantasy leagues, and it doesn't look like Herbert and company could get me to the championship. (Um, if the Chargers go off this season and help managers win a fantasy championship, just pretend I wrote the opposite of everything above.)

COWBOYS

Fantasy Questions for Draft Day 2024

Answering six key questions to help prepare for 2024 fantasy drafts

BY IAN HARTITZ

Rico Dowdle is vying for a significant role in the Dallas backfield

PROBLEMS ARE solved by asking good questions. Today's problem: How are we going to win our fantasy championships this season? Accordingly, here are six questions — and answers — that will help us ultimately accomplish just that.

→ Who is the Cowboys' RB1?

Maybe Jerry Jones' "all-in" offseason approach nets the team another **R**B in the future via trade, but for now the starting job seems to be between Ezekiel Elliott, **R**ico Dowdle, Deuce Vaughn and **R**oyce Freeman.

While Zeke didn't seem *completely* washed up last season — fun fact: Elliott posted a faster top speed than Tony **P**ollard! — he has certainly been on a downward trend of late:

- × 2018: +0.45 rushing yards over expected per carry (No. 17 among qualified **R**Bs)
- × 2019: +0.4 (No. 12)
- × 2020: +0.03 (No. 32)
- × 2021: -0.19 (No. 31)
- × 2022: -0.34 (No. 43)
- × 2023: -0.39 (No. 43)

Don't expect a workhorse role for him in his age-29 season, but Elliott does profile as the most likely goalline option in the NFL's reigning No. 1 scoring offense. There's potential for TD-dependent **R**B3 usage here, particularly if the Cowboys refrain from making any trades at the position between now and Week 1.

Dowdle is the other late-round dart worth throwing here. The former undrafted free agent has just 113 career touches to his name but flashed in 2023, particularly in the passing game where he posted top 10 marks at the position in yards per reception (8.5) and yards per route run (1.35). It's unlikely **R**ico ever seizes full control of the backfield, but keep in mind double-digit combined carries and targets per game in a likely top 10 scoring offense can go a long way in fantasy land.

→ Who is this season's prime late-round QB pick?

We'll define "late" as anything past **R**ound 10 (ie. pick 120). Three contenders immediately emerge:

Jaguars **Q**B Trevor Lawrence (**Q**B16 AD**P**, pick 120.8): Battled through a bruised knee, high ankle sprain, concussion and a sprained AC joint behind **P**FF's sixth-worst offensive line last

season. Per sources (me), no QB had more dropped TDs or near-scores that featured only one foot down inbounds. But the front office threw buckets of cash at the O-line and retooled the WR room, so don't be surprised if the 24-year-old (!) talent finally breaks through in fantasy land in Year Four.

Commanders QB Jayden Daniels (QB17, pick 122.3): This mostly comes down to the 2024 NFL Draft No. 2 overall pick's sweet, sweet rushing upside. Overall, Daniels' 14.5 fantasy points per game from purely rushing production in his final collegiate season easily led this class and bested what guys like Kyler Murray (12.3) and Anthony Richardson (10) managed in their final year in school. Fifteen of the 16 QBs with 125-plus carries in a single season went on to post top 12 numbers in fantasy points per game — including 11 top five finishes. Daniels projects as a fantasy stud from Day 1, even if his real-life passing efficiency initially leaves a bit to be desired.

Browns QB Deshaun Watson (QB22, pick 158.5): Posted fantasy QB8, QB25, QB10, QB8 and QB15 finishes in his only five full starts of 2023. Still one of just four QBs in NFL history to average at least 20 fantasy points per game during their career, you don't need more than one hand to count the league's current QBs with higher highs in fantasy land than what Watson managed in his pre-Cleveland days. It's far from guaranteed the 29-year-old will start partying like it's 2020 again, but the price point is cheaper than ever, and it would make sense if the Browns embrace more of a pass-first approach with longtime bellcow RB Nick Chubb working his way back from last season's devastating knee injury.

→ What is the Bills' pass-game pecking order?

All of the involved options project to be pretty damn affordable for a passing game that has produced the ninth-most yards and third-most TDs through the air over the past three seasons. No offense boasts more available WR targets and air yards after Stefon Diggs was traded to the Texans and Gabe Davis took his talents to Jacksonville in free agency.

There are five main leaders in the clubhouse to work as QB Josh Allen's newfound No. 1 pass-game option. In order of likelihood:

TE Dalton Kincaid: Finished second on targets (91) to Diggs' 160 (lol) last season. The only problem is the potential absence of a full-time role: Kincaid's targets per game with fellow TE Dawson Knox healthy (5.0) were a far cry from what he pulled off in five games without (7.4).

WR Keon Coleman: Bills general manager Brandon Beane has already stated this: "Josh Allen knows we ... are going to be counting on Keon Coleman early." The 2024 NFL Draft's No. 33 pick provides Allen with arguably the most lethal contested-catch artist of his short career. There's double-digit TD upside here.

WR Khalil Shakir: Somehow managed more receiving yards than even Diggs (462 to 422) in the Bills' final 10 games of 2023 — and on less than half the targets (80 to 37). Don't expect the rising third-year WR to average 13.6 yards per target again, but volume-based WR3 upside is possible (particularly in full-PPR formats).

WR Curtis Samuel: His three-year, $24 million deal includes $15 million guaranteed, likely locking Samuel into three-WR sets for the next few years. The ex-Panther and Commander possesses dual-threat ability at WR and RB and is a candidate to rack up triple-digit combined carries and targets in 2024.

RB James Cook: Amassed 63 targets in 19 games (counting the playoffs) last season, although Bills RBs as a whole still ranked just 24th in targets on the season. That's life with a dual-threat QB such as Allen under center. Also note that incoming rookie Ray Davis is plenty capable of contributing in the passing game.

Ultimately, it'd make sense if Buffalo took a page out of the Chiefs' manual and embraced more of a spread-out approach. Even then, this trio of WRs in particular look like quality mid- to late-round targets, with each projected to have an ADP outside the top 36 wideouts.

Daniels projects as a fantasy stud from Day 1

> Trevor Lawrence is set to come at a discount this fantasy draft season

< Is this finally the year Rashod Bateman breaks out in Baltimore?

→ Which under-the-radar WRs are worthy of late-round darts?

Trades and late free-agent signings are always capable of throwing a wrench into future depth-chart projections, but the following WRs appear to boast these three desirable traits: 1) Starting job in three-WR sets, 2) Good-to-great QB, 3) Solid enough track record of success as a pro.

The Cardinals possess two of these WRs in Michael Wilson and Greg Dortch, who are expected to flank No. 4 pick Marvin Harrison Jr. in three-WR sets. QB Kyler Murray boasts 4,000-yard and 30-TD upside, so it'd make sense if two of his top four pass-game options flirt with some boom outcomes in the shootout-friendly NFC West.

Meanwhile, Ravens WR Rashod Bateman hasn't exactly lived up to his first-round hype, but Baltimore still felt good enough to sign him to a two-year extension worth up to $16.75 million. The departure of Odell Beckham Jr. and the decision to not use a Day 1 or 2 pick on the position seemingly cements Bateman as the team's lead option on the outside.

While Browns WR Elijah Moore didn't exactly live up to his gaudy preseason hype in 2023, he did rack up 104 targets in essentially 16 games and could continue to be this passing game's No. 2 WR depending on how Jerry Jeudy transitions to life in Cleveland. Still just 24 years old, Moore is still the same player who posted overall WR4 production in the final six games of his rookie season.

Detroit's passing game flows through Amon-Ra St. Brown and Sam LaPorta first, but that doesn't mean complementary options Jameson Williams and, to a lesser extent, Kalif Raymond won't get in on the fun. Don't underestimate "Jamo" finally living up to his first-round hype with Josh Reynolds (64 targets, 70.6% snaps in 2023) now in Denver.

Saints WR Rashid Shaheed leads the entire NFL in yards per target (11.1) among all players with at least 100 pass-game opportunities over the past two seasons. While Chris Olave projects to be the No. 1 option in New Orleans, Shaheed's blend of dynamic YAC and field-stretching ability make him an intriguing late-round option at the position.

And finally, while the Rams prioritized Puka Nacua and Cooper Kupp in their passing game last season, that didn't stop No. 3 WR Demarcus Robinson from posting PPR WR20, WR23, WR25, WR15 and WR25 finishes, respectively, in his final five full regular-season games of 2023. Their decision to not add another WR via free agency and to wait until Round 6 to draft one leaves the 30-year-old Robinson as Matthew Stafford's projected No. 3 pass-game target again. That's not bad for someone likely to be drafted outside of fantasy's top 200 picks come August.

→ Are there ANY Chargers players fantasy managers should be targeting?

The backfield certainly seems to be the place to look. Per Fantasy Life's Dwain McFarland, new head coach Jim Harbaugh's offenses have attempted more passes than runs just twice in his last 17 years as a head coach. This dwindles to just one occasion if we exclude the 2020 COVID season.

It's tough to see Richardson not reaching at least top 10 heights

Yes, Justin Herbert is one helluva quarterback, but so was Andrew Luck, and that didn't stop Harbaugh from posting 63% and 59% run-play rates, respectively, during the 2009 and '10 seasons.

Throw in the lack of proven pass-catchers in this passing offense and the presence of longtime run-first offensive coordinator Greg Roman and it seems inevitable that the Chargers will rank among the NFL's most run-heavy offenses in 2024 and beyond. The three main players expected to compete for lead-back duties:

- J.K. Dobbins: Claims to be 100% following last season's Achilles injury, although the track record of RBs returning from Achilles injuries is littered with unfortunate tales. Kudos to D'Onta Foreman and Justice Hill for returning from the injury relatively well, but the same can't be said for backs such as James Robinson, Cam Akers and Marlon Mack, among others.
- Gus Edwards: Has averaged a robust 4.9 yards per carry during his career and scored 13 TDs in 2023. That said, Lamar Jackson and the Ravens' typically great O-line helped matters, and all but one of those 13 scores came from inside the five-yard line.
- Kimani Vidal: Boasts the sort of size (5 foot 8, 213 pounds) and speed (4.46 40-yard dash) to take a lonely fantasy analyst from six to midnight in a hurry. Throw in a career 92-700-1 receiving line in four seasons at Troy and you have a theoretical three-down talent with fantasy-friendly upside.

Betting on sixth-round picks is rarely a great idea — just six rookie RBs have managed top 24 numbers without the benefit of Day 1 or Day 2 draft capital over the past 10 years — but Vidal is in a soft enough depth chart to warrant late-round exposure.

The artist known as Gus the Bus (Edwards) also has the potential to outperform his ADP in 2024, particularly in non-PPR formats where his lack of pass-game prowess isn't going to have a big effect on his value.

→ Just how high is too high to draft Colts QB Anthony Richardson?

Last year's No. 4 pick proved to be a fantasy godsend in his limited opportunities in 2023:

- Week 1: 20.9 fantasy points (QB4)
- Week 2: 17.7 points in 18 snaps before suffering a concussion (QB19)
- Week 4: 29.6 points (QB2)
- Week 5: 4.4 points in 22 snaps before suffering a shoulder injury (QB28)

Overall, Richardson averaged a robust 0.73 fantasy points per dropback last season — the highest mark among all QBs with at least 75 dropbacks. Not bad for a guy who started only (checks notes) 13 total games in his collegiate career at Florida.

That said, the passing performance wasn't pretty. Richardson ranked 45th in CPOE (-7.7%) among 49 qualified QBs. While his sub-60% completion rate isn't a death blow considering guys like Jared Goff (54.6%), Andrew Luck (54.1%), Josh Allen (52.8%) and Jalen Hurts (52%) were all worse as rookies, it's also not ideal.

No injury discount will be afforded here, but it's also tough to see Richardson *not* reaching at least top 10 heights with a little better bill of health considering the tantalizing rushing upside at hand inside of an offense that ranked second in neutral situation pace on the season. He warrants top six treatment ahead of 2024.

New-Look Offenses in 2024

With the Bears, Commanders and Falcons getting new play-callers, how will the scheme changes affect their personnel?

BY CHRIS ALLEN

→ Chicago Bears

- New OC/Play-Caller: Shane Waldron

Waldron got a pass from fantasy managers since he'd worked with Sean McVay. We also saw Geno Smith revive his career under Waldron in '22. But after watching the Seahawks last season, most would attribute their most recent playoff berth to Dave Canales, the QB coach at the time. Regardless, there are some components to Waldron's philosophy that have us excited to watch the Bears offense.

- Early-Down Neutral Pass Rate (2021-23): 54.8% (8th)
- Air Yards per Attempt: 7.9 (12th)

An easy way to describe Seattle's passing game is aggressive. Russell Wilson averaged a whopping 9.9 air yards per attempt during his final year there. Smith's 8.2-yard aDOT ranked in the top 12. Caleb Williams' 76.0% adjusted completion percentage is the second-highest in the class. He had no problem working the intermediate and deep areas of the field on in-breaking/timing routes.

With target hogs such as D.J. Moore (28.5% target share in '23) and Keenan Allen (24.4%) at his disposal, Williams has the arm strength and talent to break Chicago's single-season record for passing yards, set by Erik Kramer back in 1995. But he may need above-average efficiency from his WRs to do it.

- Middle of the Field Throw Rate (2021-2023): 41.0% (31st)
- Plays per Game: 58.7 (32nd)
- Pre-Snap Motion Rate: 38.6% (27th)

Let's combine two ideas: throwing farther downfield and (primarily) targeting the perimeter. On the one hand, with an accurate QB, you open yourself up to high-end efficiency. Geno was top 12 in EPA per play in back-to-back seasons. However, the longer-developing route concepts and poor O-line play had Smith's pressure rates in the top 10. And with a static offense that was less reliant on motion, he was top seven or worse in turnover-worthy play rate.

Fortunately, Williams is no stranger to creating out of structure, and the Bears' offensive line had the fifth-best pass-block win rate in '23. Plus, adding rookie WR Rome Odunze to the Moore-Allen duo puts Chicago's trio well ahead of the Seahawks' pass-catchers. But before we crown them all (and Caleb) top 12 assets at their position, Waldron's play-calling around the goal line should give us some pause.

- 2023: -6.6% (red-zone pass rate over expectation)
- 2022: -1.0%
- 2021: -0.3%

After adding strong rushing talents in Kenneth Walker III and Zach Charbonnet, Waldron looked to the ground as a means to punctuate Seattle's drives. Their passing rates dropped as the backfield talent increased. Now in Chicago, a cadre of D'Andre Swift, Khalil Herbert and Roschon Johnson lends credence to the idea of a balanced approach.

Swift's ability to create can keep Williams on schedule. And Herbert or Johnson can move the chains in short-yardage situations. With Chicago's defense ending '23 as a top three unit, conservative play calls to close out games should be in the range of outcomes for Williams in Year 1.

→ Washington Commanders

- **New OC/Play-Caller:** Kliff Kingsbury

Kingsbury's scheme isn't limited to the Air Raid. He brought some elements of it to the Cardinals, but don't expect four verts and downfield shots from Jayden Daniels every snap. However, Kingsbury does give Daniels a leg up.

- Time per Play (2019-2022): 38.0 seconds (1st)
- Early-Down Neutral Pass Rate: 56.4% (6th)
- Shotgun Snap Rate: 86.3% (2nd)
- Two-TE Formation Rate: 25.5% (13th)

Arizona had the fastest-paced offense during the Kingsbury–Kyler Murray era at a blistering 65.3 plays per game. For reference, Washington was among or sat just outside the bottom 12 in pace and plays per game. Combined with the Commanders' preference to pass in long down-and-distance situations (average +2.7% PROE), WRs Terry McLaurin and Jahan Dotson stand to benefit. Despite being WR1, McLaurin has eclipsed 130 targets just once. Meanwhile, one-fifth of Dotson's looks have been on downfield shots. Kingsbury's ability to blend play-action concepts (13th-highest usage rate) into the passing game will keep Daniels efficient while serving up high-percentage passes to his top options.

The offense's potential doesn't rest solely on the aerial attack. The Cardinals generated the third-most rushing EPA during Kingsbury's time in Arizona despite the fact that not a single starting lineman earned a blocking grade over 85.0 from PFF. Plus, Kingsbury's use of pistol formations, two-TE sets and TEs in linemen slots pre-snap kept the ground game moving. Every level of the Commanders' offense has a chance to excel.

→ Atlanta Falcons

- **New OC/Play-Caller:** Zac Robinson

Robinson is another Sean McVay acolyte. The ex-Rams passing game coordinator/QB coach gets his first OC post. Even better, the Falcons will have Kirk Cousins, who worked with McVay in Washington and another McVay disciple, Kevin O'Connell, in Minnesota. Familiarity is strong, and trends support the idea of an easy transition for Cousins.

- Early-Down Passing Rate (2022-23): 53.1% (LAR), 56.1% (MIN)
- Pace: 40.5 seconds, 39.7 seconds
- Plays per Game: 63.5, 64.8

Both the Rams' and Vikings' passing games are similar in terms of throw rate and pace of play, which bodes well for WR Drake London. There's an expected bump in volume, along with a likely change in route concepts.

- Play Action Rate: 15.4% (12th)
- Middle of the Field (MotF) Throw Rate: 45.2% (24th)
- Air yards per attempt: 7.4 (24th)

Per Reception Perception, London found the most success in the intermediate area of the field on out routes. Other timing concepts (e.g. digs, curls) are also in his toolbox. It will take no time for Cousins to link up with a WR often compared to Kupp during the draft process. TE Kyle Pitts will get his. A simple metric to follow for TE production is their route rate, and longtime Rams TE Tyler Higbee has ranked 10th or better in routes per dropback the last three seasons.

Utilization Report: How to Supercharge Your Fantasy Team

This report will help you understand who is overperforming (sell high) and underperforming (buy low) based on historical data tied to metrics we know drive volume

BY DWAIN MCFARLAND

SO YOU'VE just finished dominating your draft. Congratulations, you have completed Step 1 on your journey to a fantasy football championship. You and I both know there's a long road ahead.

Come Sept. 5, the **2024** season will kick off, and much of what we thought we knew will be in question. This is where the real game begins, and throughout the season we must make crucial decisions. Should we hold on to what we have, or do we need to adjust?

- Why did my starting RB score only six points? Do I need a replacement?
- Who is Puka Nacua, and should I drop Skyy Moore to grab him?
- My backup WR outscored my starter last week. Now who should I start?

If you've ever found yourself unable to fall asleep as you wrestle with these life-altering questions, you need help. No, not that kind of help. You need the **U**tilization Report.

At Fantasy Life, we have developed a suite of tools designed to help you answer these questions and more. After all, we want you well-rested and in peak form for your playoff march to a fantasy title this December.

Below are a few examples from the **2023** season that demonstrate how the **U**tilization Report tools can help.

SCAN THE QR CODE
For access to Fantasy Life's **U**tilization Report player comparison tool >

→ Sack your Start/Sit Decisions

Scenario: You've been patiently waiting for Colts RB Jonathan Taylor to return from injury, but smartly rostered Zack Moss. Now it's Week 9 and you must choose between them. Taylor scored more points in Week 7, but Moss led the way in Week 8. Moss is also on the injury report due to a heel injury.

Ugh, what should you do?!

Utilization says: Start Taylor. He's trending up, and his transition to a full-time role is nearly complete. The previous week, he led the tandem in snaps, attempts, routes and targets.

JONATHAN TAYLOR

WEEK	SNAPS	RUSH ATT.	ROUTES	TARGETS	TPRR	SDD SNAPS	I5 ATT	LDD SNAPS	2MIN SNAPS	PPR	PPR RANK
5	16%	18%	14%	4%	25%	25%	0%	10%	100%	4	35
6	43%	53%	37%	12%	27%	42%	50%	43%	38%	12	20
7	49%	50%	48%	19%	27%	25%	100%	42%	0%	21	7
8	61%	52%	59%	6%	8%	29%	50%	67%	0%	11	19
9	75%	62%	75%	23%	24%	100%	50%	80%	100%	18	8
Sample	49%	47%	47%	13%	20%	44%	50%	48%	48%	13.2	-
Season	34%	37%	28%	5%	13%	36%	71%	29%	22%	15.6	33

ZACK MOSS

WEEK	SNAPS	RUSH ATT.	ROUTES	TARGETS	TPRR	SDD SNAPS	I5 ATT	LDD SNAPS	2MIN SNAPS	PPR	PPR RANK
5	16%	18%	14%	4%	25%	25%	0%	10%	100%	4	35
6	43%	53%	37%	12%	27%	42%	50%	43%	38%	12	20
7	49%	50%	48%	19%	27%	25%	100%	42%	0%	21	7
8	61%	52%	59%	6%	8%	29%	50%	67%	0%	11	19
9	75%	62%	75%	23%	24%	100%	50%	80%	100%	18	8
Sample	49%	47%	47%	13%	20%	44%	50%	48%	48%	13.2	-
Season	34%	37%	28%	5%	13%	36%	71%	29%	22%	15.6	33

Result: Taylor continued his upward utilization trajectory, bogarting 62% of the rushing attempts and dominating route participation at 75% in Week 9. He outscored Moss by 15 points.

→ Win the Waiver Wire

Scenario: It's Week 8. You ignored TE in your fantasy draft, and your late-round darts missed the mark (welcome to the club). You also don't have a high waiver wire position, so you can't wait for the next breakout of the season — one of your pesky leaguemates will claim them ahead of you, even if it's just out of spite. It is time for a preemptive strike.

Who could help you level the playing field if things break their way?

Utilization says: Stash Trey McBride on your bench. His route participation has been on the rise over the last two games. His 22% targets per route run (TPRR) rate ranks in the top 10 for TEs on the season and second behind Marquise Brown for the Cardinals. If his utilization continues to expand, he offers top six upside.

TREY MCBRIDE <

TREY McBRIDE

WEEK	ROUTES	TPRR	TARGETS	CATCHABLE TARGETS	ADOT	AIR YARDS	EZ TARGETS	3/4 DOWN TGTS	PA SNAPS	PPR	PPR RANK
1	29%	20%	7%	100%	7	8%	0%	0%	100%	4	25
2	41%	15%	7%	100%	9.5	7%	0%	0%	100%	5	31
3	32%	13%	5%	100%	1	1%	0%	0%	0%	1	43
4	19%	11%	2%	100%	4	1%	0%	0%	100%	2	44
5	25%	33%	11%	67%	11	11%	0%	0%	67%	4	31
6	48%	23%	14%	100%	7.2	10%	0%	8%	40%	10	12
7	51%	30%	19%	50%	3.5	10%	0%	8%	67%	6	20
Sample	35%	22%	9%	88%	6.4	7%	0%	2%	68%	4.57	-

Result: McBride averaged 15.8 points over the final eight contests of the fantasy season, registering five top eight finishes.

→ Tackle the Trade Market

Scenario: It's Week 10. Your league trade deadline looms. You want to target an upside WR3 who has yet to peak. Because rookie WRs often see an increase in playing time late in the year, you narrow your search: rookies with a strong target-earning profile and a path to playing time.

Who should you try to trade for?

Utilization says: Rashee Rice is your priority target. He isn't a full-time WR, but his route participation has climbed from a 36% average to 61% over the last three games. Plus, his targets per route run of 24% are miles ahead of the teammates currently getting more playing time through Week 9.

> RASHEE RICE

RASHEE RICE (WR)		VS.	MARQUEZ VALDES-SCANTLING (WR)		VS.	JUSTIN WATSON (WR)		VS.	SKYY MOORE (WR)	
Routes	44%		Routes	68.99%		Routes	52%		Routes	52%
TPRR	24%		TPRR	9%		TPRR	15%		TPRR	14%
Targets	13%		Targets	7%		Targets	9%		Targets	9%
Catchable Tgts	88%		Catchable Tgts	63%		Catchable Tgts	71%		Catchable Tgts	62%
ADOT	5.88		ADOT	16.87		ADOT	21.96		ADOT	10.52
Air Yards	9%		Air Yards	17%		Air Yards	28%		Air Yards	13%
EZ Targets	22%		EZ Targets	6%		EZ Targets	16%		EZ Targets	19%
3/4 Down Tgts	16%		3/4 Down Tgts	10%		3/4 Down Tgts	12%		3/4 Down Tgts	14%
PA Targets	22%		PA Targets	26%		PA Targets	11%		PA Targets	19%
PPR	10.44		PPR	5		PPR	5.38		PPR	4.89
PPR Rank	6867		PPR Rank	60.67		PPR Rank	59.25		PPR Rank	60.67
BEST UTILITY										

Result: Rice continued to expand his route participation, ultimately earning a full-time role by Week 14. He averaged 17.2 fantasy points per contest over his final six games — a WR1-worthy mark.

The Utilization Report tools don't come with a crystal ball that guarantees 100% accuracy. We hand-picked those 2023 examples for a reason. But our goal is clear: Provide the data and insights that help fantasy players identify over- and underperformers ahead of their leaguemates more often than not in the long run.

Fantasy Off-season 101

Fantasy football draft season doesn't fully commence until August, but there is work to be done now

BY COOTERDOODLE

To managers who consider themselves fans of fantasy football, the life cycle of events is all too familiar:

1. Offseason anticipation
2. Draft day
3. Weekly waves of euphoria
4. Fantasy playoff season
5. Repeat

Luckily for us, we're sitting firmly in the midst of our offseason (No. 1), which means we've got plenty of fantasy goodness on the horizon. But there's no need to wait. Just because we're not actively watching NFL games right now doesn't mean we should be sedentary.

Do you find yourself asking the age-old question of, "What now?" Well, look no further.

1. Time to Warm up

Look, you wouldn't run a marathon without warming up before the big race, would you? The offseason is a time when we, the fantasy players, should be training. (Don't worry, this is just a metaphor. We don't actually have to run.)

If you enter your draft without the proper preparation, you might pull something. And at this age, I'm not risking it. So here's the regimen:

- Coffee brewing? Mock draft.
- Waiting for a meeting? Mock draft.
- Out with friends? Mock draft.
- Home alone? Go out with friends ... and mock draft.

Sure, none of it's real, but that's never stopped you before. You play fantasy football.

2. Brush up on league lore

If there's one thing you NEED to know before you draft (besides your league settings and the NFL player pool, of course), it's the ins and outs of your leaguemates. Not only their likes and dislikes, but their history in the league.

If you've been playing together long enough, you've hopefully kept tabs on all of the wonderful mistakes that have occurred in your league over the years, including:

- Draft busts
- Terrible trades
- Waiver wire blunders
- General animosity toward others

League lore is important. It helps to know which of your leaguemates will overvalue the QB position. It's beneficial to know which guy is going to reach for players from his home team. And damn if it isn't fun to predict who will draft the first defense off the board.

But, more than anything, brushing up on your league's history will elevate your trash-talking abilities.

If there's one thing you *need* to do this season (besides winning, of course) it's trash-talking your leaguemates under the table.

Like folklore, league lore deserves to be passed down year after year. So brush up now. It's the only tradition guaranteed to increase camaraderie while simultaneously decreasing your opponents' morale.

3. Check your weaknesses at the door

Ugh, I hate this part!

It's *soooo* much easier to blame my fantasy losses on a rule change, or a bad trade, or running out of FAAB. But sometimes our failures are self-inflicted and the only way forward is to look back.

If you can identify your weaknesses, you'll have a much better chance at fixing them — and fixing your fantasy teams.

Plus, a little self-reflection never hurt league morale. So, check yourself before you wreck yourself.

Pride check: Do you tend to avoid making trades that can help you purely to spite the person on the other end?

Envy check: Are you often too hung up on the players who got away during the draft? Too jealous to see a solution?

Gluttony check: Do you spend too much time trying to nickel and dime your way into a winning trade that you sour the entire experience?

Sloth check: Do you regularly forget to set your lineups, giving your opponents an easy win and dampening the thrill of their victories?

It's not easy to admit it when you're weak.

But if you truly want a chance at winning this thing, or at the very least want to enjoy playing, you've got to get your weaknesses in check.

4. Find old draft patterns

Do you ever find yourself rosterbating to an ex ... team? You should try it. Seriously. Take a look back at your draft results from previous years. Take note of your major hits and misses.

Really look for patterns here.

- × Do you frequently draft "late-round fliers" a little sooner than you should?
- × Do you put way too much stock in preseason performances?
- × Do you tend to draft a defense/kicker before any of your friends?
- × Are you drafting way too many players from your home team?
- × Is your lineup front-loaded with rookies and lacking the safety of solid vets?

Old habits die hard, but we can't break 'em if we don't identify 'em. So be sure to take some time this offseason to look at the picks of your past. Look back and learn something.

5. Learn the etiquette

Quite frankly, I saved the best for last.

Before I can let you enter into another fantasy football season, I have to get a few things off my chest. Four things, to be exact:

1. Stop prying for intel in everyday conversations. We all know when you're trying to gauge our interests on a player. And you're making us uncomfortable.
2. Respect the draft schedule. We've all carved time out for this event and we have been looking forward to it for months. The least you can do is have the right app downloaded and show up on time.
3. Don't hold up the clock. The clock is there to be used, so I won't nag about you taking your allotted time (you had the 1.01. How were you not ready?). But you can't keep going past the timer. And you can't keep asking the commissioner to "pause" the whole damn thing. Father Time never stops. Neither should the clock.
4. Pay your f---ing dues.

2024 Fantasy Football Mailbag

Unbreakable NFL records, perceived value of our own professions and how to quiet a dog named Kelce on Sundays

BY PETER OVERZET

Feeling lost in life? Need help with your team? Peter Overzet is here to help and answer your burning questions about life, love and fantasy football...

Dear Pete,

What if the rest of life was like professional sports? For example, I'm an ER doctor. What if my hospital, Hospital X, decides it really needs a plastic surgeon. So they trade me to Hospital Z, along with two new docs coming out of next year's graduating class, in exchange for a plastic surgeon and a family practice doc. Now, I have to move, sign a new contract, meet and work with a new team ... wild. Could apply to any other career/industry!

— DOC ON THE TRADE BLOCK

Dear **D**oc on the **T**rade **B**lock:

Hot damn! **T**his is an incredible hypothetical, though I'm also terrified by it. **Y**ou've sent my brain down a rabbit hole of twisted possibilities ...

Imagine you go to get a haircut only to find out your talented barber was traded to a luxury resort in the Maldives in exchange for three hair stylists.

Or you show up to your local coffee shop only to learn that your barista was flipped to a nearby Starbucks in a package deal that included a new espresso machine, cash considerations and the rights to their next five applicants. Sounds thrilling ... and also like a total nightmare.

Most companies can barely get their employees to return to the office after going remote for the pandemic. Imagine how much trouble they'd have hiring if future employees knew they could be shuffled off to another part of the area or even country on a moment's notice?

(That said, if you're reading this, Fantasy Life, I'm more than willing to be "traded" to Hawaii or Costa Rica. I'd even settle for San Diego at this point.

I'm ready to pahk my cah somewhere else than Hahvad Yahd.)

It's also pretty funny to reverse that hypothetical and imagine NFL players with "normal" jobs. For instance ...

Stefon Diggs (Marketing Analyst at Oracle) gets passed over for a promotion to become Director of Marketing, so he rage-skips the quarterly meeting and posts a cryptic message on the corkboard in the breakroom:

"Survival was my only hope, success my only revenge."

Or Aaron Rodgers (lead singer for a wedding cover band) gets drunk at a gig, hits on the bride, throws up on the cake and blames his bassist and drummer as he gets dragged out of the venue.

Or Kyle Pitts (violin prodigy) gets recruited by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but instead of him playing the violin, they have him selling hot dogs during intermission instead ... until the orchestra gets a new conductor from Vienna (and one from the state of Washington, too!) and a new concertmaster from London who rehabilitates Pitts' career.

It's safe to say that we should all be thankful for our employment rights and appreciate the chaos that NFL players endure both on and off the field ... although I would watch a reality show featuring Pitts playing in an orchestra. Imagine what he could do with that majestic wingspan in the pit.

Dear Pete,

I named my dog Kelce after my favorite tight end, who took me to a fantasy football championship in 2019. Now, every Chiefs game, my Kelce zooms, howls, and barks whenever he hears his name on the telecast. It got out of control during last winter's Super Bowl run. I can't watch the NFL with my dog anymore. He needs a new name. Pete, will you please suggest one that will not give my dog fits when I watch the NFL?

— BURIED BY BARKS

Dear Barks:

Naming your dog after an NFL player is all fun and games until you realize they have a Pavlovian barking response to PPR production.

It seems cruel to change your poor dog's name just for some peace and quiet once a week, so let's get creative. A few potential solutions:

- Hope and pray the team unleashes rookie Xavier Worthy and he steals away some of Kelce's targets, reducing your pooch's strong BPG (barks per game) numbers.
- Try the foreign language broadcast. Maybe the Italian pronunciation of "Kelce" will be less triggering for your Kelce. "Mama mia! Travis Kelce!"
- Get some noise-canceling headphones for dogs. You might think I just made this up, but I looked it up on Amazon. They exist. And honestly, they're pretty fashionable. Let Kelce enjoy some quiet time next time you are watching a Chiefs game.

If you really do need to go the new name route, though, I recommend "Waller." You'll never have to worry about his name being mentioned again.

Dear Pete,

In today's NFL, with the usage and perceived value of RBs, will Emmitt Smith's rushing record ever be broken? Consider this: Smith rushed for 18,355 yards over 15 seasons. That's 1,224 yards per season. The next-closest active players are Derrick Henry (9,502) and Zeke Elliott (8,904). Both those backs are in their twilight and would need to average over 1,000 yards per season ... for nine more years. Records are made to be broken, but this one seems like one that is going to stand for a long time. What are your thoughts?

— DOUG WOLF, MR. RESTLESS ABOUT RECORDS

Dear Doug Wolf:

First of all, great name. If I didn't know any better, I'd think you were a private detective in a British crime novel.

You might actually be Sherlock, though, because I think you're on to something. Over the past few years, we've seen the shift away from ground-and-pound offenses to aerial attacks in which WRs are king and RBs are more optimally deployed through the air.

It would be near impossible for anyone to surpass Smith's record considering the average career of an NFL RB is now 2.57 years. Yes, you read that correctly: 2.57 years. Even with the 2024 free agency featuring a renaissance for veteran RBs — Henry, Josh Jacobs, Saquon Barkley and D'Andre Swift all earned nice paydays — the RB shelf life has never been shorter.

Not to mention, teams continue to devalue the position. In the 2024 NFL draft, we didn't see an RB come off the board until Jonathan Brooks at pick 46, the second-longest wait for a first RB to come off the board ever.

What's really interesting is that we are finally seeing this NFL sea change carry over to fantasy drafts. RBs used to dominate the first round of fantasy drafts, but now it's ruled by receivers. Only Christian McCaffrey — a unicorn in this current landscape — has withstood the test of time at the top of fantasy drafts. And even that is because of his receiving prowess, not his rushing.

That's a long way of saying that you are safe to buy that Emmitt Smith autographed mini helmet without worrying about his record being toppled.

The real question is whether one of these new superstar WRs has a chance to surpass Jerry Rice's insane 22,895 career receiving yards? Yeah, that's probably not going to happen, either. Justin Jefferson — widely regarded to be the most talented WR in the league — has 5,899 career receiving yards over four years for an average of 1,474 yards per season. He'd need to keep up that pace for more than 11 years to surpass Rice.

Welp, maybe some (NFL) records aren't meant to be broken?

Draft Strategy

Consider one of these four unique methods that offer immense upside on draft day

BY IAN HARTITZ & PETER OVERZET

IT TAKES more to win in fantasy football than just a set of rankings and a prayer. **A** game plan is necessary, and below we have four increasingly popular approaches to consider.

→ Zero RBs: Embrace the chaos of turnover at running back

Ah, the super scary drafting strategy in which you take ZERO RUNNING BACKS ...

I'm kidding, although you'd be surprised what people believe these days.

"Zero RBs" strategy doesn't literally mean selecting zero running backs. **I**t's more about smartly navigating the current landscape at the position, which has changed greatly over the years.

Outside of Christian McCaffrey, who scored 122 points more than the next-closest RB (**T**ravis **E**tienne Jr.) in 2023, there are only a few true bell cow RBs left in the league. By bell cow, **I** mean RBs who get 20-plus touches per game, work on obvious passing downs and goalline carries. **T**he days of LaDainian **T**omlinson and Marshall Faulk toting the rock almost every play on offense are long gone.

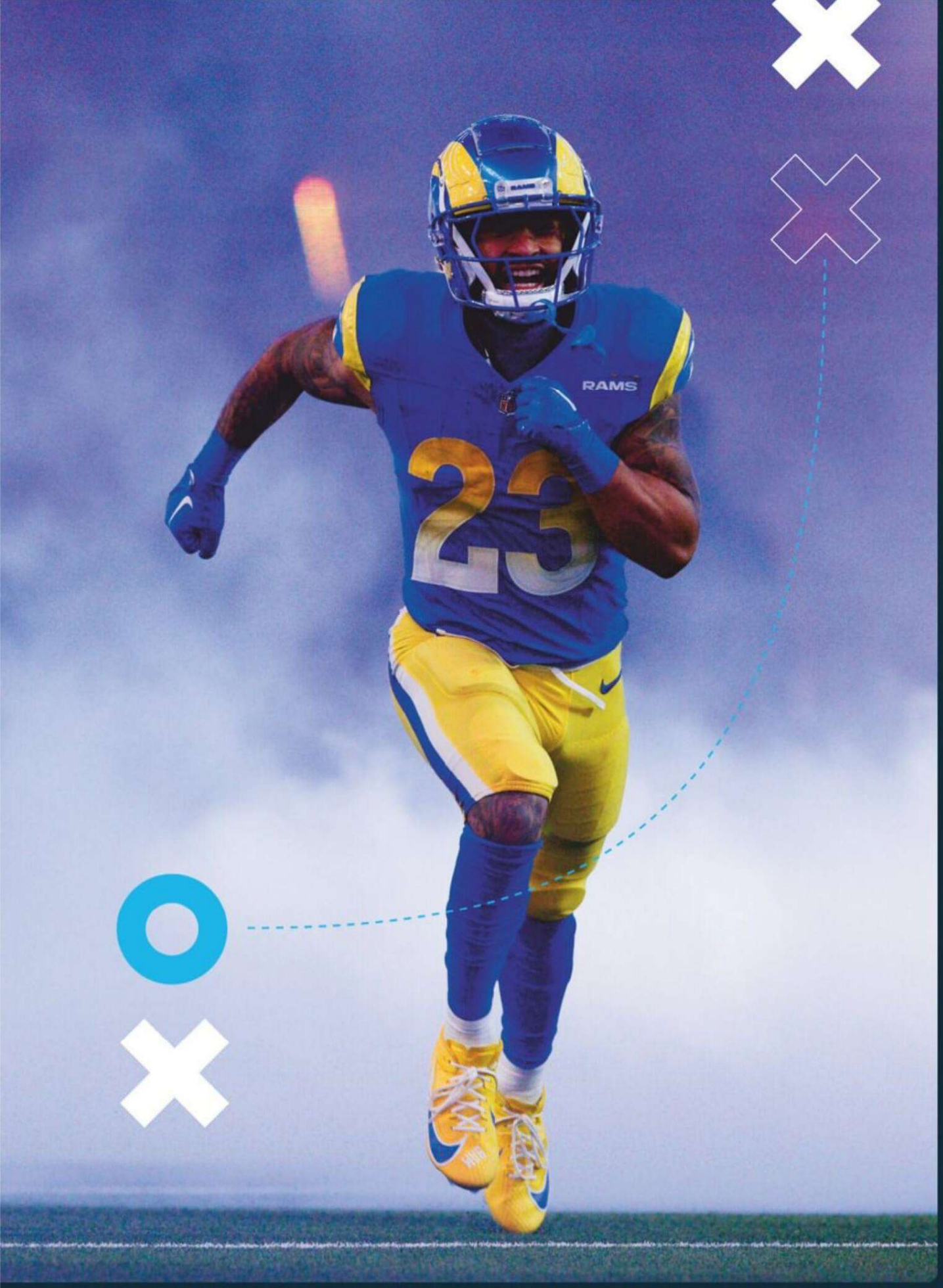
> **T**hose subscribing to "Zero RBs" might have landed **K**yren Williams in 2023, which turned out to be a very good thing

A vast majority of running backs in 2024 will be part of timeshares or committees that cap their overall upside. **I**nstead of fighting this reality and paying bell cow prices for fake bell cow backs in the early rounds, "Zero RBs" allows you to prioritize other positions at the start of your draft — primarily WR — and save the bulk of your RB selections for after Rounds 5 and 6.

But the selling point for Zero RBs doesn't end there. **T**he strategy not only positions you to grab pass catchers with both high ceilings and high floors, it also allows you to benefit from the chaos of the RB position throughout the season.

Think about it this way: When a top WR gets hurt, no single WR steps up in his absence and fills their exact role. **T**he targets are often distributed evenly across the remaining pass catchers. But when a starting RB gets hurt, a backup RB generally receives the lion's share of the starter's touches.

This dynamic makes backup RBs far more valuable than backup WRs, which makes Zero RBs (early WRs + late RBs) a stronger structural strategy than Robust RB (early RBs + late WRs).


RAMS
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And because we know chaos is inevitable at the running back position, we can position ourselves to build potential juggernaut teams by pairing superstar receivers at the beginning of our drafts with late-round running back fliers who have multiple paths to fantasy relevance.

Not all of these fliers will hit, of course, but year after year, we see late-round running backs emerge out of nowhere for a variety of reasons, including injuries to lead backs, in-season trades, ambiguous backfields, efficient play or sometimes simply outplaying the starter.

> 2023 Zero RB examples (reason for ascent):

- **Z**ack **M**oss with **C**olts (injury)
- **K**yren **W**illiams with **R**ams (trade)
- **R**aheem **M**ostert with **D**olphins (ambiguity)
- **D**e'**V**on Achane with **D**olphins (efficiency)
- **C**huba **H**ubbard with **P**anthers **&** **D**evin **S**ingletary with **Tex**ans (outperforming starter)

The best way to e**x**ecute **Z**ero **RB** is to let the draft come to you. If a running back with true bell cow potential is available in the first couple of rounds, don't hesitate to grab him. **B**ut if the talent at the position quickly runs dry, don't force the issue. Instead, load up on **WR**s, **T**Es and Q**B**s in the early rounds and stay patient before pulling the trigger on your first **RB**.

Remember: **W**hile it might seem scary to have a weak group of **RB**s heading into the season, your opponents are at even more of a disadvantage. **T**hey are weak at a more important position (**WR**), and their late-round fliers are far less likely to contribute meaningful points to their roster than yours.

^ Looking to dominate at **TE**? **S**am **LaP**orta was your man last year, and could be this year as well

→ Elite TE: Don't be afraid to dominate the tight end position

In a lot of ways, tight ends are like running backs in fantasy football:

- There are only a handful of elite ones.
- There are lots of landmines, busts and injuries at the position each year.
- The very top TEs score significantly more points than the rest of the TEs.

Anyone who rostered Travis Kelce in **2022** (316 points in PPR) or Mark Andrews in **2021** (**301**) is very familiar with the benefit of having an Elite TE. And longtime fantasy gamers who drafted Rob Gronkowski in **2011** (**330**) or Jimmy Graham in **2013** (**303**) are well aware of what a league-winning season looks like from the game's best tight ends.

If you can land an Elite TE who is used like an alpha **WR** or becomes a **TD**-scoring machine, your opponents will simply not be able to keep up.

The Elite TEs have the potential to score **20**-plus points per game, while the rest of the tight end pool not only has a much lower ceiling, but also a much lower floor.

Dominating your opponents at the "onesie" positions (QB and TE) essentially gives your team a head start in every matchup.

The **2024** NFL season sets up to be an awesome year to execute the Elite TE strategy because there are a handful of options who can contend for the overall TE**1**, yet none of them are likely to be taken high in most drafts.

Dominating the "onesie" positions (QB and TE) gives your team a head start in every matchup

After Kelce and Andrews mostly flopped in **2023**, drafters seem less interested in spending an early-round pick on a tight end. A few tight ends showcased elite scoring on a weekly basis last year, but none of them sniffed a **300**-point season. Rookie Sam LaPorta led all TEs in PPR scoring (**22**5), thanks largely to his **10**-TD season for Detroit.

2023 Elite TE examples:

- Sam LaPorta (**TD** machine)
- Evan Engram (**PPR** machine)
- George Kittle (YAC machine)

The league-wide mediocre performances from tight ends in **2023** has resulted in cheaper TE prices across the board this year. In previous years, Elite TEs would cost drafters one of their top picks in Rounds **1**, **2** or **3**.

But in **2024** you can start your Zero **RB** or Anchor **RB** approach and load up on early **WR**s, then grab an Elite TE in Rounds **4**, 5 or 6 — essentially having your cake and eating it too.
The lack of depth at the tight end position makes Elite TE an even more attractive strategy. If you get caught waiting to take one until the double-digit rounds, there's a real risk you will end up drafting a player who has a zero-point floor on a given week.

Don't be scared off by the **2023** results.

We have a large sample of data that clearly indicates how valuable an Elite TE is when constructing a powerhouse fantasy roster. And now the prices allow you to acquire one at a discount relative to their true upside.

And if your Elite TE busts, guess what? The TEs you can grab on the waiver wire won't be that different from the TEs your opponents drafted in the later rounds.

The takeaway: Buy the dip on Elite TEs in **2024** and enjoy the spoils.

Having a bell cow back provides a backbone while you attempt to patch the RB2 spot

→ Anchor RB: Snag a stud running back early to anchor your squad

We've already explained the "Zero RB" strategy. "Anchor RB" is essentially the same mid- to late-round antifragile mindset *but* with the benefit of one early-round RB to help "anchor" the squad.

This helps patch up two flaws in the Zero RB approach:

1) Contrary to popular belief, Zero RB drafters aren't the only fantasy managers with access to the waiver wire throughout the year. In an ideal world, you already stacked your bench with the best handcuffs available; then again, 2023 league-winner Kyren Williams didn't even boast a top-200 ADP ahead of Week 1. Having at least one bell cow back to rely on really helps provide a backbone in your early-season matchups while you attempt to patch the RB2 spot.

2) There are indeed fewer workhorse RBs in the NFL these days: Just six backs totaled 300-plus touches in 2023 compared to 19 (!) back in 2000. On one hand, this demonstrates the reality that managers shouldn't expect many backs to have true three-down roles in 2024. On the other, this adds credence to the notion that the few remaining workhorse RBs are actually more valuable than ever given their scarcity.

The overarching idea here is to take *only* the perfect RB prospect inside of the first few rounds of your draft. This player will ideally boast elite measures in:

- Age: RBs tend to fall off around 29 for fantasy purposes.
- **V**olume: Three-down workloads are a must.
- **E**fficiency: Contributor in both the run and (especially) pass games.
- Offensive environment: Fantasy-friendly scoring opportunities are plentiful.
- Health: Being injury-prone is largely a myth, but we don't want to be targeting guys with active injury issues.

Like any strategy, it's easy to pick out the good and bad picks from yesteryear with the benefit of hindsight. That said, early-round RBs as a whole were largely NOT a part of winning fantasy lineups in 2023:

> RBs with a top-30 overall ADP in 2023:

- Christian **M**cCaffrey: 3.2 ADP
- Austin **E**keler: 7.1
- Bijan Robinson: 7.8
- Nick Chubb: 11.4
- **S**aquon Barkley: 15.1
- Tony Pollard: 15.9
- Derrick Henry: 20.5
- Josh Jacobs: 25.9

Early-season injuries didn't help the cause for the likes of **E**keler, Chubb and Barkley, while Robinson, Pollard, Henry and Jacobs managed to under-achieve despite suiting up for 17 games.

So it's C**M**C or bust, baby!

Kidding, but **M**cCaffrey scoring a whopping 122 more fantasy points than the next-closest RB (Travis **E**tienne Jr.) last year shows the advantage that drafters had with using their first-round pick on the 49ers' stud workhorse. Injuries and philosophy changes will need to be monitored throughout the offseason to properly identify the top anchor RB candidates ahead of next season, but the

> Bijan Robinson could anchor your 2024 squad — if you're drafting early enough

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There are regularly more top-performing fantasy assets at QB available later in drafts

strategy of anchoring your lineup with one stud back at the top of the draft before gobbling up the other positions makes for a slight yet solid pivot off a pure Zero RB mindset.

Some early candidates to assume true, unhindered every-down roles in (probably) good offenses and, accordingly, will likely be taken inside the top-three rounds of most drafts: McCaffrey, Bijan Robinson, Breece Hall, Saquon Barkley, Jonathan Taylor, Kyren Williams and Travis Etienne Jr. This isn't to suggest every one of these "anchors" will hit, but at a minimum their archetype makes them worthy of early-round consideration.

→ Late-round QB: Throw your late-round dart at a much bigger bullseye at the QB position

It can be tempting to pull the trigger on a stud dual-threat QB such as Josh Allen or Jalen Hurts early in fantasy drafts Yet, we also have consistently seen late-round QBs work their way to the top of end-of-season leaderboards over the years. Full-time starters with upside are almost never available past Round 10 at RB and WR, but they're commonplace at QB. This results in more late-round gems under center: Four top-10 scoring QBs had an ADP outside of the top 150 in 2023, compared to two at RB and WR combined. The fact that most fantasy leagues start only one quarterback results in a steep dropoff in ADP. The players at each position with a top-120 ADP in '23:

- QB: 15
- RB: 40
- WR: 53
- TE: 11

Of course, for every fantasy manager who struck gold with C.J. Stroud or Jordan Love in 2023, there was another who had to suffer through Bryce Young and Kenny Pickett. These late-round QBs are going well behind their higher-floor peers at the position for a reason, but the good news is that the reduced cost to acquire them allows for a few more bullets overall — and less buyer's remorse when it comes time to attack the waiver wire instead.

Look at the difference in preseason ADP and final rank in fantasy points per game among these five late-round gems from the last two years:

- 2023 Jordan Love (QB21 ADP, QB5 finish in fantasy points per game)
- 2023 Brock Purdy (QB22, QB7)
- 2023 C.J. Stroud (QB30, QB8)
- 2022 Daniel Jones (QB21, QB8)
- 2022 Geno Smith (QB34, QB9)

Moral of the story: There are regularly more top-performing fantasy assets at QB available later in drafts, making them the preferred darts compared to late-round WRs and RBs. We're throwing a dart at a *much* larger bullseye when targeting QBs late relative to WR and RB.

There are multiple candidates to provide legit QB1 upside at a double-digit round ADP price (Trevor Lawrence and Deshaun Watson among them), but Commanders rookie Jayden Daniels stands out as perhaps *the* late-round QB of 2024. This mostly comes down to the NFL Draft's No. 2 pick's sweet, sweet rushing upside. Overall, Daniels' 14.5 fantasy points per game from purely rushing production in his final college season easily led this class and bested what guys like Kyler Murray (12.3) and Anthony Richardson (10.0) managed in their final year in school. Fifteen of 16 QBs with 125-plus carries in a single season went on to post top-12 numbers in fantasy points per game — including 11 top-five finishes. Daniels projects as a fantasy stud from Day One.

< In 2023, Brock Purdy delivered as a late-round QB dart throw

Best Ball: The Ultimate Mock Draft

Chase big-time prizes while mastering the ADP landscape via best ball drafts

BY PETER OVERZET

HAVE YOU ever tried to fire up a mock draft on ESPN or Yahoo to practice for your upcoming fantasy draft(s), only to watch some jamoke take Tim Tebow 1.01 overall for the lulz?

Another scenario: Half the drafters peace out after just a few rounds because they got bored, effectively destroying the usefulness of the mock draft to simulate your actual draft.

What if I told you that those days are over ... that you could compete for massive prizes while also practicing for your own leagues at the same time?

Well, that's exactly what the "best ball" fantasy format provides.

→ What is best ball?

Best ball is arguably the fastest-growing fantasy format. It takes everything that is great about season-long leagues (drafting), removes the most time-consuming elements (setting lineups, scouring the waiver wire, haggling for trades) and delivers prizes that rival the biggest DFS contests (Underdog Fantasy and DraftKings tournaments feature top prizes of $1 million or more).

Many people get intimidated by the words "best ball," but it's far less complicated than it sounds. In fact, it is the easiest format to play.

The draft is similar to what you are used to in a typical league. At Underdog — the most popular best ball platform — you draft 18 players to fill out a weekly starting lineup of 1 QB, 2 RBs, 3 WRs, 1 TE and 1 FLEX. There are no defenses or kickers. There are no trades or waiver adds; the team you drafted is the team you'll have for the entire year. Then the best ball gods take the wheel.

→ You mean I don't set a lineup?

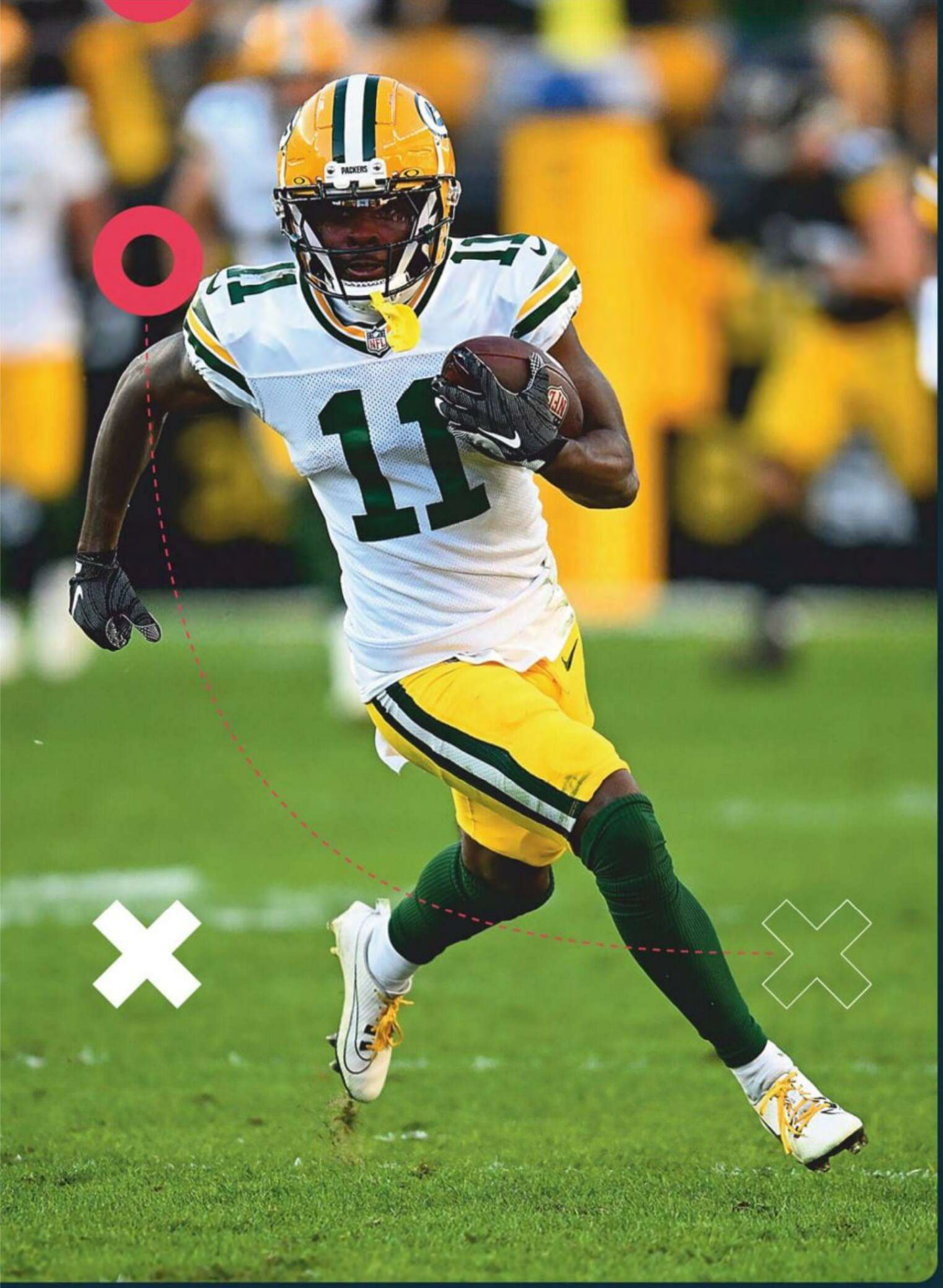
Each week, your best lineup is calculated automatically; you don't have to wrestle with any start/sit decisions or midweek roster moves.

Have you ever agonized over which WR to start, only to watch the guy you benched go off? That wouldn't happen in best ball, because your top scorers are automatically placed into your lineup. It's a beautiful thing.

→ How to construct a best ball team

Because owners can't make any moves throughout the season, best ball requires drafters to be calculated regarding strategies and structure. Drafting a best ball team is all about balancing

> Jayden Reed ended up a best ball hero in 2023 due to his Week 17 star turn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depth and upside. Rosters need to be able to cover bye weeks — as well as potential injuries — while also working under the constraints of limited roster spots.

In general, drafters should select 2-3 QBs, 4-6 RBs, 7-9 WRs and 2-3 TEs. The exact number of picks devoted to a specific position should be determined by when you draft that position. The earlier you select a position (quality), the fewer players at that position you need to take (quantity). The No. 1 thing to remember when drafting is to think quantity or quality at each position, not both.

For instance, If you start your draft with three straight RBs, you should take only one or two more, at most, and those selections should be made much later in the draft. In this scenario, you want to draft as if those three premium picks at RB will carry your team at the position. You'll now need to devote a higher quantity to WRs because you don't have any from the top few tiers.

You can apply the same thought process to every position. If you take the great Josh Allen with one of your early picks, you don't need to take two more QBs. You should wait until the double-digit rounds to grab a second QB, working under the assumption that you'll be using Allen's score most weeks; the other QB(s) will rarely crack the starting lineup during the season.

→ Best ball tournaments

Some best ball contests are single, self-contained 12-person leagues, but the most exciting aspect of best ball is the number of large-field tournaments in which drafters can turn a small buy-in into millions of dollars.

Because there's no management of the teams during the season, one person can draft a bunch of teams with no additional time commitment outside of the draft itself (typically around 45 minutes for an 18-round draft).

Most best ball tournaments have a similar structure that make them a fun puzzle to solve from a strategy standpoint. Not only will you need a team good enough to advance from your 12-person draft in the regular season (Weeks 1–14) to the fantasy playoffs, but you'll also need a top score in the subsequent rounds when it matters most (Weeks 15–17).

Each of these rounds functions as its own mini tournament, as the points reset in the following round:

- Weeks 1–14 (Round 1)
- Week 15 (Round 2)
- Week 16 (Round 3)
- Week 17 (Round 4 - Finals)

Because a majority of the prize money is distributed to the Week 17 finalists, it's crucial that drafters prioritize players with late-season upside. Last year, veteran WR Adam Thielen was a great pick for the regular season, but he did nothing in the fantasy playoffs. On the flip side, Packers WR Jayden Reed, a late-round pick, delivered a tournament-winning performance in Week 17 and won an Underdog drafter $3 million in the Best Ball Mania IV contest.

→ Best strategy when competing for large-field tourney prizes: chasing upside

Here are my favorite ways to draft for late-season upside:

Target Rookies. Rookies are one of the skeleton keys to drafting high-upside best ball teams. Because they are a mystery box, so to speak, rookies are often discounted relative to their true upside (think Puka Nacua and Tank Dell last season). And, most importantly, rookies traditionally see their roles and production increase as the season moves along (think Rashee Rice last year or Amon-Ra St. Brown in 2021), which perfectly aligns with giving our best ball teams a boost during the fantasy playoffs.

Load up on backup RBs. In addition to rookies, one of the best cohorts of players to reach upside scenarios are backup and handcuff RBs. These backs

Rookies are one of the skeleton keys to high-upside best ball teams

> Puka Nacua was a mystery heading into 2023 and turned out to be best ball gold

> De'Von Achane's efficiency earned him a lot of playing time and a lot of best ball value

are often "contingency-based" players because they don't project to get a ton of opportunities on paper but would possess massive upside in the event of an injury to the starter.

Not all of these backs will hit, but when they do they hit in a big way because they can serve as a one-for-one replacement for the back in front of them. Injuries are one of the biggest drivers for backup RBs being thrust into starting roles (think Zack Moss in Indy last year), but late-round RBs can emerge for other reasons: trades (Kyren Williams), ambiguous backfields (Raheem Mostert), efficient play (De'Von Achane) or simply outplaying the starter (Chuba Hubbard and Devin Singletary).

Stack up your players. Stacking or, more generally speaking, correlation reduces the number of things we must get right to win. If Bengals WR Ja'Marr Chase has a big year, it's likely that Joe Burrow will as well. Stacking isn't just about QBs and pass-catchers, though. It can be a concentrated bet on a single offense, and this can be accomplished by any pairing of players from the same team regardless of their position.

Drafters who took the plunge on multiple undervalued Texans in 2023 — Nico Collins, Tank Dell, Dalton Schultz, Devin Singletary and C.J. Stroud — enjoyed huge returns thanks to the correlation of all those players succeeding in tandem. Just be patient with stacking and don't reach too much to secure the stack. Think of correlating your players as a boost and reaching ahead of a player's ADP (average draft position) as a negative.

Buy the dip on discounted players. The final group of players we should be targeting are injured players with an imminent return. These players are often discounted by multiple rounds because of the expected lack of production at the beginning of the season. But as we discussed earlier, the production we care about the most is in Weeks 15–17.

If there is ever a time for a fantasy manager not to worry about poor production, it's at the beginning of the season when the rest of our teams are the healthiest they'll be all year and the bye weeks have yet to begin. Odell Beckham Jr. missed the first four games of his rookie year due to a hamstring injury, then set the league on fire down the stretch and finished as the overall WR6 in just 12 games.

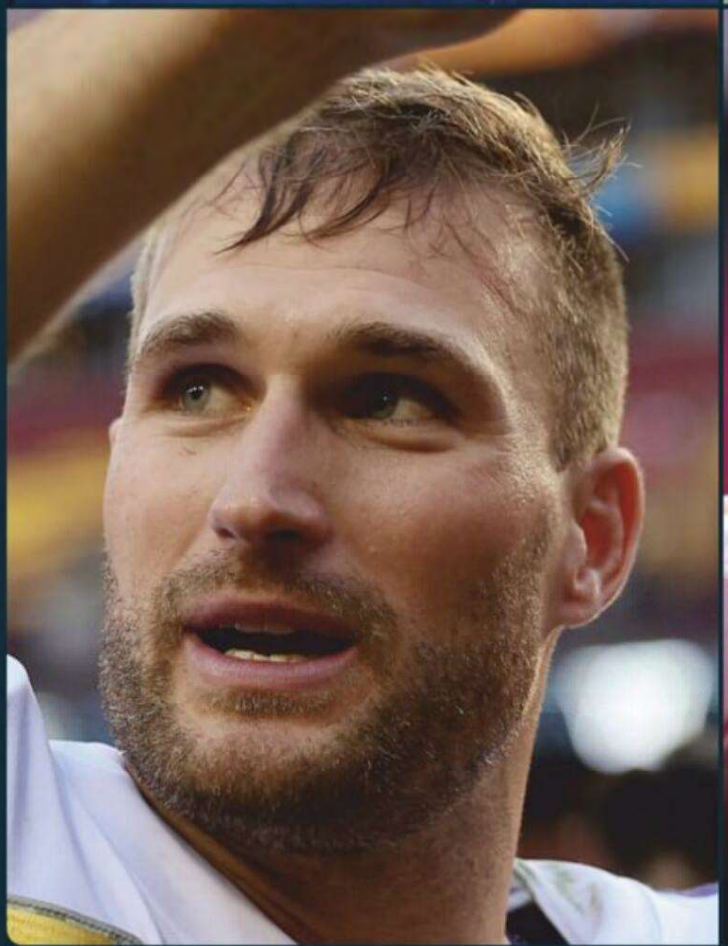
When making these kinds of bets, just make sure the players have the talent and pedigree to take advantage of their opportunities by the end of the season.

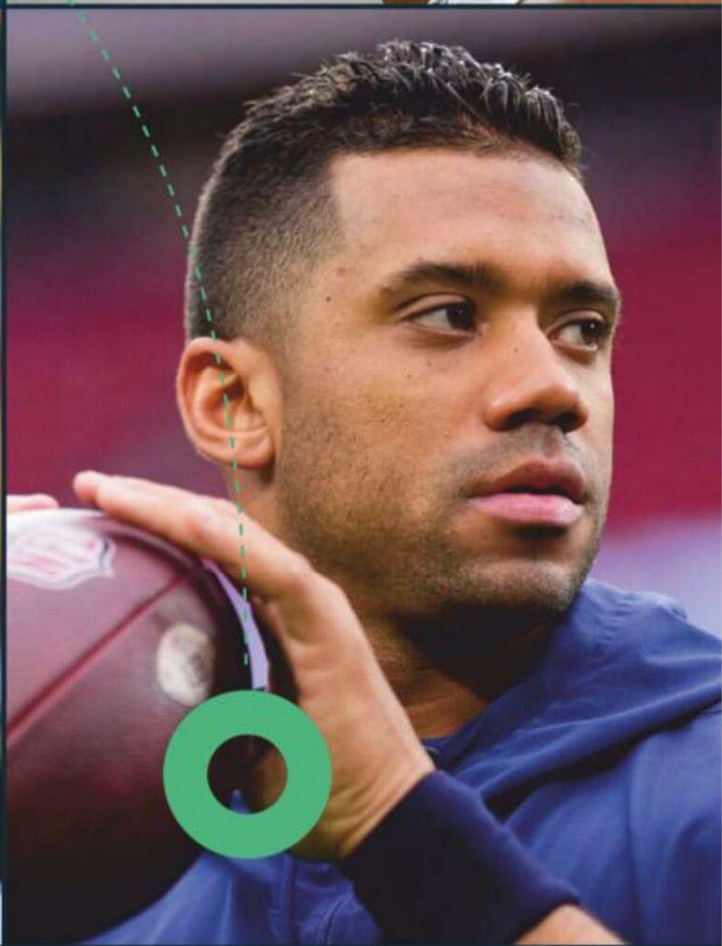
→ Time to start drafting

You now possess the playbook for drafting best ball teams with tournament-winning upside.

Be sure to review the scoring and settings for whichever best ball contest you register for. Subtle differences in scoring and tournament structure can impact optimal strategy.

Of course, the real benefit to drafting a few best ball teams is cutting your teeth in the ultimate fantasy training ground and preparing to crush your buddies in your season-long league.





Dynasty Digest

The highlights — and lowlights — of the most fantasy-relevant acquisitions and draft picks after the 2024 NFL offseason

BY SAM WALLACE

→ Kirk Cousins
QB, Falcons

The prize of free agency, Kirk Cousins has been a pretty consistent top-10 option since arriving in Minnesota:

- 2018: -0.012 EPA per dropback (No. 29 among qualified QBs)
- 2019: +0.199 (No. 7)
- 2020: +0.188 (No. 10)
- 2021: +0.137 (No. 10)
- 2022: +0.058 (No. 19)
- 2023: +0.145 (No. 6)

Cousins landed in arguably the best situation possible for a veteran coming off a brutal injury (Achilles tear). Last season, the Falcons boasted PFF's No. 4 pass-blocking offensive line and currently have the offensive weapons for Cousins to succeed right away — WR Drake London, TE Kyle Pitts and RB Bijan Robinson are legit No. 1 options.

Despite the injury, new environment and sudden presence of a first-round rookie QB (Michael Penix Jr., the NFL draft's eighth pick), dynasty managers should feel confident having Cousins as a high-end QB2 with low-end QB1 upside.

→ Russell Wilson / Justin Fields
QBs, Steelers

I had several offseason discussions with our own Sam Holt (resident Steelers fan) about who Pittsburgh would bring in at QB. Our guesses were as follows:

- Sam H.: Justin Fields
- Sam W.: Russell Wilson

We never thought we'd both be right.

Wilson will get the first crack at the starting role, but we'll see how soon the clamor for Fields begins. Fields offers more intrigue with his rushing ability, but the Steelers have been content winning with conservative QB play and an elite defense.

Wilson offers decent value this season, but Fields is someone I would acquire in superflex formats, especially if the price has dropped now that he's a QB2.

→ Saquon Barkley
RB, Eagles

A free agent RB got the bag. What a time to be alive!

The Eagles gave Saquon Barkley $37.75 million reasons ($25.5 million guaranteed) to be their lead back and help get them back to the Super Bowl. He's now the fourth-highest-paid RB, as only Alvin Kamara ($75 million), Christian McCaffrey ($64 million) and Jonathan Taylor ($42 million) have contracts with a higher total value.

This move is fantastic for fantasy managers, as the Giants trotted out the 30th-ranked

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Old QB faces in new places include Kirk Cousins (lower left) in Atlanta and Justin Fields (upper left) and Russell Wilson in Pittsburgh, while RB Saquon Barkley (upper right) arrives in Philly.

offensive line last season. At 27 years old, Barkley still offers RB1 upside.

→ Derrick Henry
RB, Ravens

I'm more excited about Derrick Henry landing with the Ravens than I am about Barkley swapping teams in his own division.

The discussion around Henry has long been, "Father Time will win eventually," but, man, I am ready to risk it all and run it back this year. Henry turned 30 in January, but one post from Ian Hartitz was enough to get me back on board.

Derrick Henry's yards AFTER contact per carry

- × 2023: 3.3 (8th)
- × 2022: 3.6 (4th)
- × 2021: 3.3 (9th)
- × 2020: 3.9 (2nd)

Titans' yards BEFORE contact per carry

- × 2023: 0.9 (30th)
- × 2022: 1.0 (30th)
- × 2021: 1.3 (18th)
- × 2020: 1.5 (13th)

Ravens' yards BEFORE contact per carry

- × 2020–23: 1.8 (1st)

It's hard to fathom a better landing spot. Still, temper expectations. Mid/low-end RB1 is probably his ceiling outside of a 20-TD season. If you need a swing-for-the-fences type of player for one season, Henry is your guy.

→ Keenan Allen
WR, Bears

Most free agency moves don't bother me on a personal level. The NFL is a business and both players and organizations are going to make business moves But Keean Allen *not* being in the patented powder blue Chargers uniform this season is going to hurt. Sigh ... nothing lasts forever.

Allen was as close to a lock as any WR for 100 receptions, 1,100 receiving yards and six TDs. Every. Single. Year. The ceiling might not be there in Chicago, but his style of play should keep dynasty managers interested.

→ Marquise Brown
WR, Chiefs

The Chiefs continued their tradition of addressing their WR room by bringing in Marquise Brown on a one-year deal. And the seemingly wasted opportunities of Skyy Moore and Kadarius Toney, the loss of Marquez Valdes-Scantling and the off-field issues for Rashee Rice make this a unique chance for Hollywood.

Brown is the type of weapon the Chiefs have been lacking since trading Tyreek Hill. Ian Hartitz summarized it perfectly: "Hollywood's versatility will make him an instant target magnet. And his presence doesn't have to affect Rice's snaps. Brown can play the Z receiver with Rice in the slot. With both demanding defenders' attention and Kelce still doing his thing, the Kansas City passing game will be a force to reckon with yet again in 2024."

Dynasty Stock Watch

→ Brian Thomas Jr.
WR, Jaguars

Here's one of the players I was most excited to follow at the NFL Draft. After the Big 3 wide-outs (Marvin Harrison Jr., Malik Nabers, Rome Odunze), Dwain McFarland's WR Rookie Model had Thomas as the WR4 among rookies.

The Jaguars traded back from No. 17 to 23 in a deal with the Vikings and landed Thomas there. He checks in at 6 foot 3, 209 pounds, and ran a 4.33 40-yard dash. Ian Hartitz put a bow on Thomas' profile with this nugget: "His 9.97 out of 10.00 RAS score ranks 10th out of 3,063 WRs from 1987 to 2024."

The Jaguars lost Calvin Ridley and Zay Jones and now have only the newly added Gabe Davis to pair with Christian Kirk. Thomas has the physical tools to immediately become a focal point for Trevor Lawrence.

DYNASTY STOCK ↑ UP

→ Joe Mixon
RB, Texans

Mixon's free-agent deal looks like one of the league's best offseason moves.

The Texans' loss of Devin Singletary opens the door for Mixon to be the clear RB1 ahead of only Dameon Pierce. Even if Pierce serves as a complementary option, Mixon is currently a

< The future is looking very bright for Jaguars rookie Brian Thomas Jr.

great value for dynasty managers with an ADP of RB23.

Mixon will have just turned 28 when the season begins. Look for him to help stabilize the ground game for the Texans.

DYNASTY STOCK ⬆ UP

→ Adonai Mitchell
WR, Colts

Day 2 draft capital and Adonai Mitchell's amazing physical profile (fifth-best RAS score of 3,188 WRs from 1987 to 2024) are encouraging signs, but the presence of an inexperienced, run-focused QB in Anthony Richardson, an elite RB in Jonathan Taylor, and two solid WRs in Michael Pittman Jr. and Josh Downs already in place made this a better real-life move than fantasy, at least for now.

DYNASTY STOCK ⬇ DOWN

→ Kyren Williams
RB, Rams

He'll still be the primary option, but Kyren Williams will no longer be the only man in the backfield after the Rams spent a Day 2 pick on Blake Corum. Regardless of what you think of Corum, his ability to handle a large workload and take the pressure off Williams will keep him on the field more often than fantasy managers of Williams would like.

DYNASTY STOCK ⬇ DOWN

Dynasty Trade Targets

→ George Pickens
WR, Steelers

The Steelers drafted offensive linemen with their first two picks and three of their first five. While they did take WR Roman Wilson in Round 3, there's value to be had with George Pickens.

After Diontae Johnson was traded to the Carolina Panthers, the door immediately opened for Pickens to take on a larger role. Pickens' metrics were already solid even with subpar QB play last season:

- × 95% route participation
- × 20% TPRR
- × 23% target share
- × 39% air yards

With a more competent QB, Pickens shouldn't have much difficulty outperforming his dynasty ADP of WR28.

→ Jameson Williams
WR, Lions

College production, draft capital, athletic profile, offensive situation and his recovery timeline from injury are all reasons to be excited about Jameson Williams. With so much attention focused on the other weapons in Detroit, Williams profiles as the ideal post-hype sleeper. He is currently the dynasty WR50.

→ Jake Ferguson
TE, Cowboys

In his first season as the starter, Jake Ferguson went 71-761-5 on 102 targets. He was second in targets for the Cowboys behind CeeDee Lamb (181), getting more than 20 more targets than the next-closest player (Brandin Cooks). He finished inside the top 10 among all TEs in every key statistic. RB Tony Pollard and WR Michael Gallup are gone, freeing up 124 targets from last season. Lamb and Ferguson could be the ones taking the vast majority. Ferguson's dynasty ADP of TE12 is too cheap.

→ Draft Recap

The Draft was historically slanted toward offense. Six QBs went in the first 12 picks, and the first defensive player wasn't selected until 15th. While most WRs landed on teams where they'll have a chance to contribute right away, I'm less optimistic about the early returns of players such as Rome Odunze, Brock Bowers and Adonai Mitchell ... Veteran RBs were among the biggest winners of the draft. This RB class wasn't perceived as strong, and the draft confirmed it ... QB landing spots were mostly what we expected (except for Atlanta snagging Michael Penix Jr.). Caleb Williams, Jayden Daniels, Drake Maye and Bo Nix should all start in Week 1, and J.J. McCarthy won't be far behind.

Guillotine League Strategy

How to stay alive in a cutthroat guillotine league

BY MATT LAMARCA

> David Montgomery brings the kind of consistency to thrive in guillotine leagues

THE FANTASY football landscape continues to evolve. **N**ew and exciting formats are becoming more prominent, including superflex leagues, best ball leagues and others. **T**his includes guillotine leagues

The format was created by Paul Charchian. It eschews the typical head-to-head format, focusing instead on total points scored each week. **A**t the end of each week, the league is reduced by one team, leaving just two managers to vie for the title at the end of the season.

Let's dive into everything you need to know about guillotine leagues and why they're an interesting format for those looking to spice up their home leagues.

→ What is a Guillotine League?

As the name indicates, guillotine leagues are not for the faint of heart. **H**aving a bad week in a traditional fantasy football league typically just results in a loss. It's far from the end of the world. **A**ll you have to do is make it to the playoffs, and anything can happen from there. **T**hat's not the case in a guillotine league. **A** bad week could mean the end of your season, even if it's the first week of the year.

Guillotine leagues remove the manager with the lowest-scoring team each week. **F**or example, an 18-team guillotine league will start with 18 teams in Week 1, and after cutting the lowest scorer, there will be 17 teams in Week 2. **E**liminations continue through the end of the year, with just one team left standing after Week 17.

But that's not the only twist. **A**fter a team is eliminated, its entire roster is added back into the free-agent pool for the remaining teams to bid on. **S**o if the team with Christian McCaffrey is eliminated, the remaining owners will have a chance to add McCaffrey to their rosters.

This process is repeated each week, leaving the last teams standing as super teams full of the best players in football.

This creates an additional level of strategy when it comes to attacking the waiver wire. Do you look to use your **FAAB** early, giving you an advantage over the rest of the field when the teams are weakest, or do you hold off using **FAAB** as long as possible to give yourself an edge near the finish line? **T**he latter strategy might give you a better chance of winning the league, but it makes you more vulnerable early in the season. **T**he same goes for drafting players. Can you afford to gamble on rookies

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Guillotine leagues have a similar feel to a survivor pool — you don't need to be first until the very end

or breakout players that might take a while to get going? Or should you shoot for the safety of undervalued veterans?

For those who enjoy the game theory aspect of fantasy football, it's a fun format that provides higher-stakes decisions than a traditional redraft league.

→ Guillotine League strategy

Guillotine leagues have a similar feel to a survivor pool — you don't need to be first until the very end. You only need to survive, particularly in the early weeks when the teams are their weakest.

That creates a very different draft strategy than in a traditional redraft league. Let's dive into some of the biggest differences.

→ Prioritize consistency

Consistency is not a sexy topic in fantasy football leagues. It's all about upside: You want to draft the players that can blow up and win your league title. If they spend the first half of the season riding your bench, it's not a huge deal; the payoff if they become superstars by the fantasy playoffs is well worth it.

That's not exactly the case in guillotine drafts. The only goal early in the season is to stay alive, and managers need a starting lineup full of players who can deliver points when called upon. That makes guys with clearly defined roles much more valuable than players with superior talent but a shakier path to playing time.

Think David Montgomery for the Lions. No one was rushing to draft him last season, but Montgomery was a perfectly acceptable RB to target in guillotine leagues. He was locked into double-digit carries on a weekly basis with plenty of touchdown upside. That type of player might not be the most appealing in a redraft format, but the safety he provides is worth its weight in gold in the early weeks of a guillotine league.

By the end of the year — if his managers made it that far — teams that rostered Montgomery likely had better starting RBs to lean on. With all the players from the eliminated teams getting cut, the final two teams have their pick of the litter. They just need to get there.

→ Focus on bye weeks

Bye weeks are mostly viewed as an annoyance in traditional redraft leagues, but they need to be meticulously planned for in guillotine leagues.

Players with early bye weeks should be pushed way down the draft board. The Chargers had a Week 5 bye last season, so a team that drafted Austin Ekeler, Justin Herbert and/or Keenan Allen had to survive an early week without marquee players. Filling in those absences later in the season would be significantly easier since there already has been a handful of replacement options released by eliminated owners. Avoiding a logjam of players with the same bye week is another smart strategy. Week 7 and Week 13 both featured six teams on byes in 2023. Managers who drafted five or six players with those bye weeks likely had a tough time filling all those holes in their lineups. The Week 13 byes weren't quite as big of a deal since they were later in the season, but too many Week 7 players could've been a death sentence in 2023.

→ Be wary of rookies

Rookies can offer some of the biggest dividends in redraft leagues. They often enter the league with unknown roles, and

< Justin Herbert and Austin Ekeler made for a fine guillotine league stack ... until that early bye week popped up

You don't need to forgo rookies entirely in guillotine leagues, but the potential payoff is much lower

those who exceed expectations can deliver massive value. They're frequently drafted in the double-digit rounds and can end the year as RB1s or WR1s, depending on injuries.

You don't need to forgo rookies entirely in guillotine leagues, but the potential payoff is much lower. Look at Lions RB Jahmyr Gibbs, for example. He was drafted as a high-end RB2 last season, and he ended up finishing as the No. 10 RB in PPR scoring. That would be considered a win for redraft leagues.

But his value wasn't nearly as apparent in guillotine leagues. He started the year playing limited snaps, averaging less than 10.0 PPR points per game through the first four weeks. He then missed two games due to injury, meaning he was essentially a non-factor through the first six weeks.

If you managed to survive with Gibbs through that time frame, you were rewarded with some high-end production down the stretch. However, there's a decent chance you were eliminated before then. Let some other owner take the risk with rookies early in the year, then swoop in and grab those players off the waiver wire when they're finally ready to pop.

→ Stud tight ends are extremely valuable

This is true in all fantasy formats, but it's more evident than usual in guillotine leagues. Remember, the goal is simply not to be eliminated each week, and having a TE who can contribute meaningful fantasy points is going to give you a significant advantage over the rest of your league. While most teams are trying to figure out which players to start and target off the wire, the teams with TEs such as Travis Kelce, Mark Andrews and T.J. Hockenson are locked and loaded. You'll be able to find stud running backs, wide receivers and quarterbacks on the wire if your team survives, but there's only one Kelce. Even in a year when he wasn't at his best, Kelce still averaged the most PPR points per game at the position. Having a premium

> Mark Andrews and his fellow top-flight TEs get a bump in value when it comes to guillotine leagues

RAVENS
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Vikings
18

Be cautious about spending too much FAAB on a single player early in the year

tight end is something that can carry you in the early weeks and is the toughest position to fill later in the year as well.

This also means that if you don't have a stud tight end and one becomes available, don't hesitate to put in a large bid.

→ Know your scoring settings

This is a general rule that can be applied to all fantasy football leagues, of course. Guillotine leagues don't come in just one standard format. Is it a superflex league? Is it PPR? How many flex positions do you have to fill? Knowing your league rules can give you an edge over your opponents.

One of the biggest advantages is prioritizing players who catch passes in PPR leagues. This might sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people just follow the default draft rankings and ignore the fact that players are evaluated differently based on your rule set. Running backs who catch passes are particularly valuable, especially at the start of the year. They provide some of the safest floors in fantasy, even if they don't have a full-time rushing role to go along with it.

→ Manage your FAAB wisely

If you draft a solid team, you should be cautious about spending too much money on a single player early in the year. The last thing you want to do is put yourself in a position where a star player at a position of need becomes available and you don't have the ammo to go after him. The exception to this rule is when a true fantasy superstar hits the wire. If a player such as McCaffrey, Justin Jefferson or Patrick Mahomes becomes available, don't be afraid to go all-in. These are the players that can win you the league title.

Other players might feel worth investing in at the time, but ask yourself, "Will a similar player become available later?" If the answer is yes, there's a good chance that player will be overpriced.

Being a "weaker" team early in the year is acceptable in a guillotine league if you're positioning yourself to dominate late.

→ Guillotine Leagues vs. Vampire Leagues

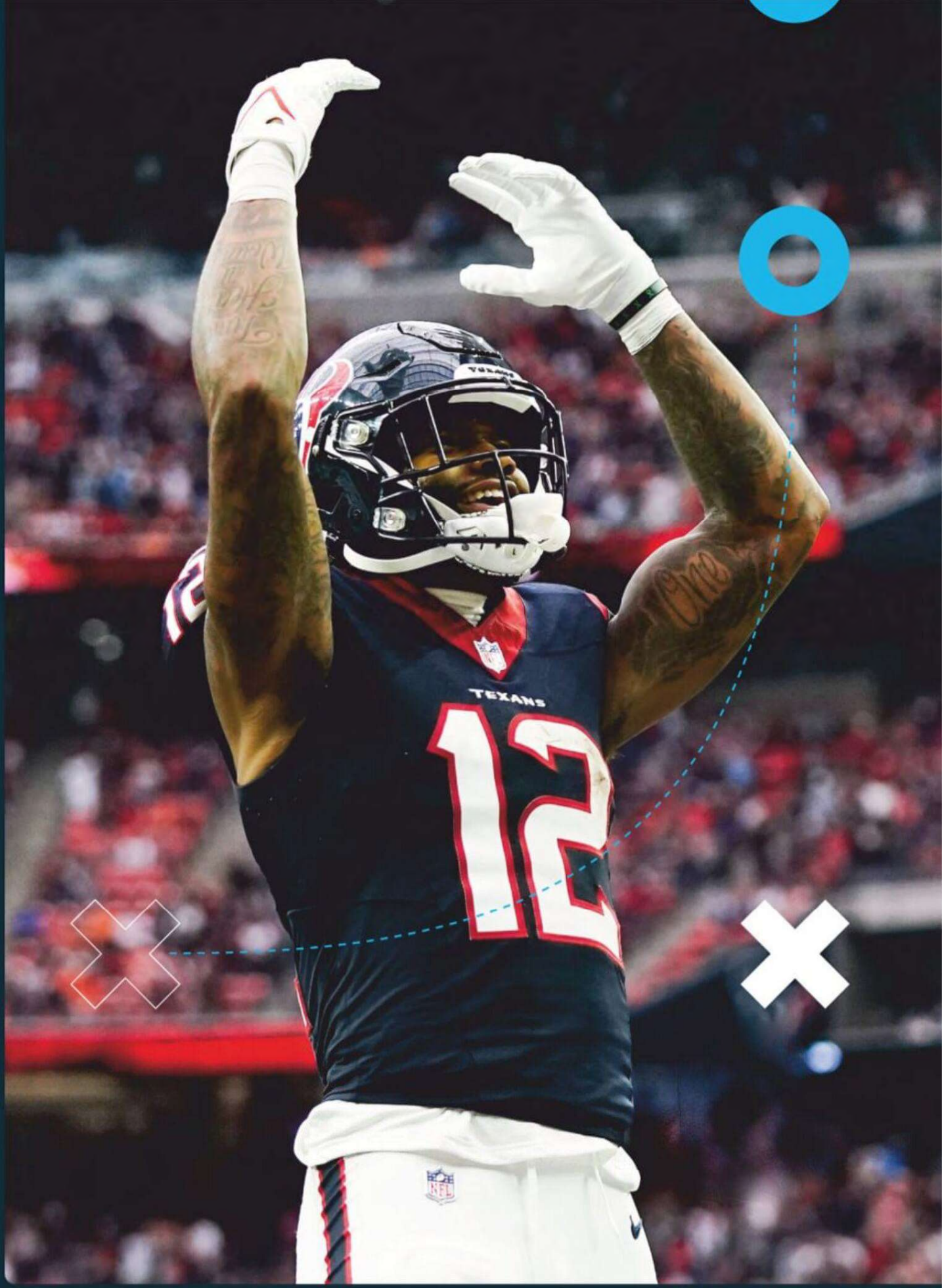
Both of these leagues sound grim, but they are completely different. Guillotine leagues put each owner on a level playing field, while vampire leagues feature a single team that starts the year with a massive disadvantage.

Essentially, one team is designated as the "vampire" in a vampire league. That owner does not get to participate in the draft. The other owners all fill their teams with players, and the vampire squad then gets to select his squad from the remaining options. This puts them behind the 8-ball to begin the year.

However, if the vampire team manages to win during the regular season — which becomes significantly easier as bye weeks and injuries pop up — it can steal a player from the team it beats. That ends up boosting the vampire squad by the end of the season, while the teams that lose to the vampire become significantly weaker.

Vampire leagues really have nothing in common with a guillotine league, but they are another format that can provide a fun twist to fantasy football.

< Guillotine league participants could be looking at the likes of Justin Jefferson on the waiver wire at some point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Essential DFS Strategies for 2024

Three macro concepts to help build competitive **DFS** lineups for all formats

BY JAMES MCCOOL

< During his breakout year, Nico Collins was one of **DFS**'s most valuable commodities

DAILY FANTASY **S**ports (**DFS**) contests offer a wide range of strategies and approaches. While there is no obvious single way to win, there are plenty of ways to lose. **L**uckily, there are some simple general concepts that can aid in building out successful **DFS** lineups.

Let's take a look at three essential strategies you'll want to use in order to find success in **NFL DFS** this year.

→ Stacking: Correlation means upside

With **DFS** roster construction, you are typically trying to manage three separate "levers" in a lineup: projection, correlation and ownership. While we have direct ways of assessing projections for both median expectation and ownership in a contest, the correlation piece is generally more nuanced. We can measure it mathematically through correlation coefficients between positions (and, to a lesser extent, players), but including it in projection models is a lot more challenging.

What we do know is that stacking to any extent increases the ceiling of a lineup when you do so utilizing players or positions that have a positive correlation. **T**his added correlation varies, and we can increase the variance of lineups by leveraging it.

In **NFL DFS**, this means mainly focusing on stacking quarterbacks with their top receiving options. **T**he general stacking combination is QB/WR or QB/**T**E. **I**ntuitively, this makes sense; the most common way for a receiver to accrue fantasy points is by catching the ball and racking up yards and touchdowns, and the QB is nearly always the one throwing the ball, thus garnering the same yardage and touchdowns. **I**f a QB throws for 300 yards and two touchdowns, it's likely that at least one, if not two, of his receiving options ended up with 100-plus yards and a **TD**.

This correlation goes both ways, of course. **I**f the QB ends up throwing for just 185 yards and no touchdowns, his receiving options more than likely posted a pair of duds. **T**his is why we say that leveraging correlation increases

^ There's risk, but there were also plenty of rewards for DFS owners stacking Tua Tagovailoa and Tyreek Hill in 2023

variance, since it affects both the ceiling and floor of a lineup.

In larger-field GPPs — contests with the most entries and largest prize pools — you can look to maximize correlation by stacking with multiple players from one or both teams. If your aim is to increase variance and reach the highest ceiling possible when a shootout breaks out, you'll want to stack as many players as you can so you capture all that upside. Going with stacks of QB/WR/WR (or QB/WR/TE) or even adding in opposing receiving options (oWR or oTE) for an over-stack of QB/WR/WR/oWR can set you up for massive-variance payoffs throughout the season.

→ Value: Cheap stars = accessible studs

Another vital piece of DFS comes from the concept of value. If you have never played DFS, the key roster construction function is the salary cap, which varies from site to site and gives you a certain amount of money to spend on players.

For instance, on DraftKings, your salary cap is $50,000 and the players are priced from $2,500 all the way to $10,000 or more. You can think of the pricing and salary structure here as the current value assessment of a player based on the site's algorithms. While the site's projections are good, there are frequently players over- or underpriced for the given slate conditions.

One of the most important concepts in DFS is identifying which players represent strong salary relief so you can also afford to fit the expensive studs into your lineup.

In NFL DFS, this value can come in many shapes and sizes and at any position, but the most common source of value is found in running backs. Without getting too deep into the weeds, NFL DFS and the assessment of value comes from volume and opportunity. While receivers have massive upside, running backs usually touch the ball more than any other skill position, thus their opportunity is the highest. This isn't to say that cheaper receivers or QBs can't be valuable — they certainly fit into the equation — but running backs are much more consistent. Running back value usually comes from RBs who are either underpriced based on lackluster results or due to an injury to the starter. A back who has been touching the ball 15 to 20 times per game but averaging a low yards per carry or not finding the end zone will have a depressed price relative to one who has been running into kinder variance. On the other hand, a backup RB who gets a spot start because of an injury to a stud is going to be underpriced relative to their projected workload since they don't have the stats to demand a high salary. Both of these are common situations in NFL DFS that represent strong value plays.

But cheap RBs are not the only source of value, and we can mathematically measure this concept pretty well with projec-

The best DFS players in the world are constantly assessing their strategies and pushing their edges

tion models. We can look at projected workloads, matchups and team totals to create projections for players and compare those to their salaries, giving us a good idea of the value they represent. QBs and WRs that are underpriced based on circumstances such as team totals and matchups that likely elevate their baseline rates are going to be necessary pieces of building competitive DFS lineups.

→ Leverage: Pivoting adds to win equity

One final concept to discuss is leverage, pivoting away from players who are overvalued by the field (the pool of entries in a contest) and rostering a player at a lower ownership with a similar projection. This creates something called relative value — a key metric in building win equity — and it allows you to more easily pass the rest of a contest's entrants based on the same amount of fantasy points. For instance, imagine you have two running backs priced at $6,000 on DraftKings. Both are projected for 13.0 fantasy points and have similar game totals and offensive environments. However, one is a backup who is stepping into a starting role, and the other is a starter who has been unlucky regarding touchdown variance. Because of this, the backup is projected to be 30% owned in contests while the starter is projected to be 10% owned.

Considering all else is mostly equal or at least relatively similar, you can gain a significant edge over the field in terms of win equity by simply rostering the 10%-owned option rather than the 30%-owned player. This is called indirect leverage, and it is the least volatile way to gain equity over your opponents. You could feasibly build the same lineup as another person and pivot from the 30%-owned player to the 10%-owned player and have more win equity for the same overall projection.

Another form of pivoting and leverage is called direct leverage, which is more volatile but offers a more effective way to beat your opponents. Whereas indirect leverage involves rostering a player with a similar projection and salary, direct leverage is rostering a player who succeeds when the higher-owned player fails — they are negatively correlated.

A great example of this is when one receiver on a team is projected to be highly owned while another on the same team is projected for much lower ownership. By simply pivoting to the lower-owned receiver, you can gain direct leverage over the field since the two players' ceilings eat into one another.

Leverage is a higher-level concept because of the volatility it creates in lineups, but it's easy enough to manage if you treat it as a lever and not a switch. Creating lineups that have a single point of leverage, either indirect or direct, is typically enough to give you win equity in contests. As you learn as a DFS player, you will better understand when and where you should introduce more and less leverage, which is where equity gains are found.

→ Do the work, reap the DFS rewards

DFS is an ever-evolving game. The best players in the world are constantly assessing their strategies and pushing their edges. There are various ways to study them and aim to replicate their strategies, and doing so is an important part of everyone's journey toward being a profitable DFS player.

One last tip: DFS, like all money games, is about making a profit, not about being right. Humble yourself, forget about your favorite team and figure out how to win.

Fantasy Life Mock Draft

Twelve great fantasy football minds got together and slugged it out for 12 rounds worth of picks. Here are the results ...

BY SAM WALLACE

THERE'S NOTHING better than getting Fantasy Life's best and brightest together for an early-offseason mock draft. It was insightful to see how different managers built their respective rosters and to gauge where the rookies fit among the veterans. With so many ways to build a successful redraft team, let's highlight some of the primary takeaways.

→ League Notes

- League Size & Scoring: 12-team, 0.5 PPR
- Platform: Sleeper
- Starting roster: 1 QB, 2 RB, 3 WR, 1 TE, 1 Flex, 1 K, 1 DEF

→ Mock Draft Recap

Round 1 felt pretty chalky, starting with Pete's first pick of 49ers RB Christian McCaffrey. A perennial contender for Fantasy MVP, CMC turned 339 touches into 2,023 scrimmage yards and 21 total TDs last year. There's no reason he can't run it back in '24 The rest of the opening round consisted of three other RBs and eight WRs. It's awesome to see Rams WR Puka Nucua go in the first round after his out-of-nowhere breakout campaign as a rookie. There's also hope that Jets WR Garrett Wilson can bounce back with QB Aaron Rodgers.

Round 2 saw the first TE taken: Sam LaPorta. The resurgent Lions offense is legit and LaPorta should be in contention to be the first TE selected in redraft and dynasty. I was surprised to see Texans WR Nico Collins selected at 2.01, but if QB C.J. Stroud is the real deal, that Houston passing attack will be exciting. Cards WR Marvin Harrison Jr., in Round 2, was the first rookie off the board.

Rounds 3 and 4 are where things got interesting. Bills QB Josh Allen, Stroud and Eagles QB Jalen Hurts

ROUND →	PETER OVERZET	DWAIN MCFARLAND	MATT LAMARCA	ROB WAZIAK	IAN HARTITZ
1	C. McCaffrey 1.01 RB - SF	C. Lamb 1.02 WR - DAL	T. Hill 1.03 WR - MIA	J. Chase 1.04 WR - CIN	A. St. Brown 1.05 WR - DET
2	C. Olave 2.12 WR - NO	J. Waddle 2.11 WR - MIA	B. Aiyuk 2.10 WR - SF	S. LaPorta 2.09 TE - DET	D. Adams 2.08 WR - LV
3	D. Samuel 3.01 WR - SF	S. Diggs 3.02 WR - HOU	K. Williams 3.03 RB - LAR	T. Etienne 3.04 RB - JAX	J. Allen 3.05 QB - BUF
4	M. Andrews 4.12 TE - BAL	T. McBride 4.11 TE - ARI	Z. Flowers 4.10 WR - BAL	K. Allen 4.09 WR - CHI	T. Higgins 4.08 WR - CIN
5	L. Jackson 5.01 QB - BAL	R. White 5.02 RB - TB	I. Pacheco 5.03 RB - KC	J. Cook 5.04 RB - BUF	J. Mixon 5.05 RB - HOU
6	C. Godwin 6.12 WR - TB	X. Worthy 6.11 WR - KC	D. Johnson 6.10 WR - CAR	K. Walker 6.09 RB - SEA	C. Ridley 6.08 WR - TEN
7	B. Thomas 7.01 WR - JAX	A. Kamara 7.02 RB - NO	J. Smith-Njigba 7.03 WR - SEA	L. McConkey 7.04 WR - LAC	E. Engram 7.05 TE - JAX
8	J. Brooks 8.12 RB - CAR	T. Benson 8.11 RB - ARI	J. Williams 8.10 RB - DEN	M. Williams 8.09 WR - NYJ	R. Mostert 8.08 RB - MIA
9	C. Brown 9.01 RB - CIN	K. Murray 9.02 QB - ARI	C. Samuel 9.03 WR - BUF	T. Lockett 9.04 WR - SEA	N. Chubb 9.05 RB - CLE
10	J. Jeudy 10.12 WR - CLE	Z. Charbonnet 10.11 RB - SEA	J. Ferguson 10.10 TE - DAL	J. Love 10.09 QB - GB	B. Corum 10.08 RB - LAR
11	J. Wright 11.01 RB - MIA	X. Legette 11.02 WR - CAR	B. Purdy 11.03 QB - SF	R. Pearsall 11.04 WR - SF	B. Cooks 11.05 WR - DAL
12	B. Irving 12.12 RB - TB	K. Miller 12.11 RB - NO	J. Dobbins 12.10 RB - LAC	R. Davis 12.09 RB - BUF	J. Dotson 12.08 WR - WAS

were selected, as were tight ends Travis Kelce (Chiefs), Trey McBride (Cardinals) and Mark Andrews (Ravens). Those one-off positions are always tricky to navigate, and my favorite part of this mock draft was seeing the various ways managers drafted QBs and TEs. In Rounds 5 and 6, QBs Lamar Jackson, Patrick Mahomes and Anthony Richardson joined TEs Kyle Pitts, Dalton Kincaid and George Kittle as the singletons snagged.

One of the biggest surprises to me was the Tee Higgins (4.08) pick. It looks like Higgins will remain the WR2 in Cincinnati. I was also surprised to see the two-round difference between Bears WRs DJ Moore (2.06) and Keenan Allen (4.09). I think I prefer the discount on Allen vs. the premium on Moore. Also, QB5 feels weirdly disrespectful for Mahomes. Richardson as the QB6 feels aggressive, but he's a fantasy cheat code waiting to happen.

By the end of Round 6, we had:

- 4 rookies drafted.
- 6 teams had a QB.
- 7 teams had a TE.

I have to highlight Pete's and Dwain's teams. Not only are both analysts prolific drafters and roster-builders, but they were randomly selected to draft right next to each other at 1.01 and 1.02, respectively. Pete took his RB1 in the first round while Dwain waited until the fifth. However, by the end of the ninth, they each had three RBs, a QB and a TE. It's fascinating to follow how each of them — and the rest of the league — went after their one-off positions and RBs.

Four rookie WRs went in Rounds 7 and 8: Brian Thomas Jr., Ladd McConkey, Adonai Mitchell and Keon Coleman, along with our first two rookie RBs, Trey Benson and Jonathan Brooks. Aging veterans also started coming off the board in this range.

This is the juncture in most drafts where fantasy managers have a decision: Go with the proven commodities of veterans, or take some chances on rookies? It's worth noting the two teams that are leaning into the rookies: Pete and Dwain drafted a combined five rookies in Rounds 6 through 9.

MATTHEW BERRY	KENDALL VALENZUELA	MATTHEW FREEDMAN	JONATHAN FULLER	CHRIS ALLEN	SAM WALLACE	COOTER-DOODLE
J. Jefferson 1.06 WR - MIN	B. Hall 1.07 RB - NYJ	B. Robinson 1.08 RB - ATL	P. Nacua 1.09 WR - LAR	A. Brown 1.10 WR - PHI	G. Wilson 1.11 WR - NYJ	J. Gibbs 1.12 RB - DET
D. London 2.07 WR - ATL	D. Moore 2.06 WR - CHI	J. Taylor 2.05 RB - IND	M. Harrison 2.04 WR - ARI	S. Barkley 2.03 RB - PHI	D. Achane 2.02 RB - MIA	N. Collins 2.01 WR - HOU
J. Jacobs 3.06 RB - GB	M. Evans 3.07 WR - TB	M. Pittman 3.08 WR - IND	M. Nabers 3.09 WR - NYG	C. Kupp 3.10 WR - LAR	T. Kelce 3.11 TE - KC	D. Smith 3.12 WR - PHI
R. Rice 4.07 WR - KC	T. Dell 4.06 WR - HOU	A. Cooper 4.05 WR - CLE	D. Henry 4.04 RB - BAL	D. Metcalf 4.03 WR - SEA	J. Hurts 4.02 QB - PHI	C. Stroud 4.01 QB - HOU
P. Mahomes 5.06 QB - KC	J. Conner 5.07 RB - ARI	G. Pickens 5.08 WR - PIT	A. Richardson 5.09 QB - IND	C. Kirk 5.10 WR - JAX	M. Brown 5.11 WR - KC	R. Odunze 5.12 WR - CHI
Z. White 6.07 RB - LV	G. Kittle 6.06 TE - SF	T. McLaurin 6.05 WR - WAS	D. Kincaid 6.04 TE - BUF	K. Pitts 6.03 TE - ATL	J. Reed 6.02 WR - GB	J. Addison 6.01 WR - MIN
A. Jones 7.06 RB - MIN	D. Hopkins 7.07 WR - TEN	C. Watson 7.08 WR - GB	D. Montgomery 7.09 RB - DET	R. Stevenson 7.10 RB - NE	A. Mitchell 7.11 WR - IND	D. Swift 7.12 RB - CHI
K. Coleman 8.07 WR - BUF	J. Burrow 8.06 QB - CIN	Z. Moss 8.05 RB - CIN	J. Warren 8.04 RB - PIT	D. Prescott 8.03 QB - DAL	N. Harris 8.02 RB - PIT	T. Pollard 8.01 RB - TEN
G. Edwards 9.06 RB - LAC	D. Singletary 9.07 RB - NYG	C. Sutton 9.08 WR - DEN	J. Williams 9.09 WR - DET	B. Robinson 9.10 RB - WAS	J. Meyers 9.11 WR - LV	R. Doubs 9.12 WR - GB
J. Palmer 10.07 WR - LAC	J. Downs 10.06 WR - IND	A. Ekeler 10.05 RB - WAS	K. Shakir 10.04 WR - BUF	E. Elliott 10.03 RB - DAL	T. Spears 10.02 RB - TEN	R. Shaheed 10.01 WR - NO
D. Njoku 11.06 TE - CLE	J. Ford 11.07 RB - CLE	D. Goedert 11.08 TE - PHI	T. Chandler 11.09 RB - MIN	A. Thielen 11.10 WR - CAR	T. Franklin 11.11 WR - DEN	B. Bowers 11.12 TE - LV
T. Hockenson 12.07 TE - MIN	M. Lloyd 12.06 RB - GB	J. Daniels 12.05 QB - WAS	D. Wicks 12.04 WR - GB	D. Mooney 12.03 WR - ATL	J. Polk 12.02 WR - NE	R. Dowdle 12.01 RB - DAL

Experts Roundtable

From league setup to fantasy advice to bold predictions, three fantasy analysts lay it all on the line

BY **IAN** HARTITZ, **DWAIN** MCFARLAND & PETER **O**VERZET

WE LOOK to Fantasy **L**ife analysts for their thoughts on how to stay ahead of your league mates and bring home fantasy titles this season.

→ What is one idea to make your home league more fun?

DWAIN: My favorite leagues aim to reduce luck. **I** prefer these formats because football already offers plenty of variance in the form of injuries, wild coaching decisions and other factors. There's one change that can hugely reduce the luck factor: Move to a blind bidding waiver system.

This system gives every manager an equal chance to land top free agents. **W**hy should teams that lost **W**eek 1 get Puka **N**acua and **K**yren **W**illiams? **W**hen your RB suffers a season-ending injury, shouldn't you have an equal chance at his backup?

In a blind bidding format, every team gets a Free **A**gent **A**cquisition Budget (F**AA**B). **I**t represents an imaginary piggy bank that you can use to bid on free agents each week. Most leagues start with $1,000 in F**AA**B. That budget must last for the entire season, so strategy comes into play. **W**ould you rather go big early in the season to maximize your investment, or do you wait out the competition and monopolize the free agent market close to the playoffs?

PETE: Here's a simple yet effective way to spice up your leagues: **A**dd more spots to the starting lineup and reduce the number of bench spots.

My favorite leagues allow me to start a majority of the players on my team. **I**t rewards the more skilled drafters; when the starting lineups are shallow, there is more luck and randomness involved as most teams in the league will have strong starting lineups. But the more players you are forced to start, the more skill is required in drafting well and working the waiver wire.

> **C**ouldn't get your hands on Puka **N**acua just because of a **W**eek 1 win? Move to a blind bidding waiver system ... now!

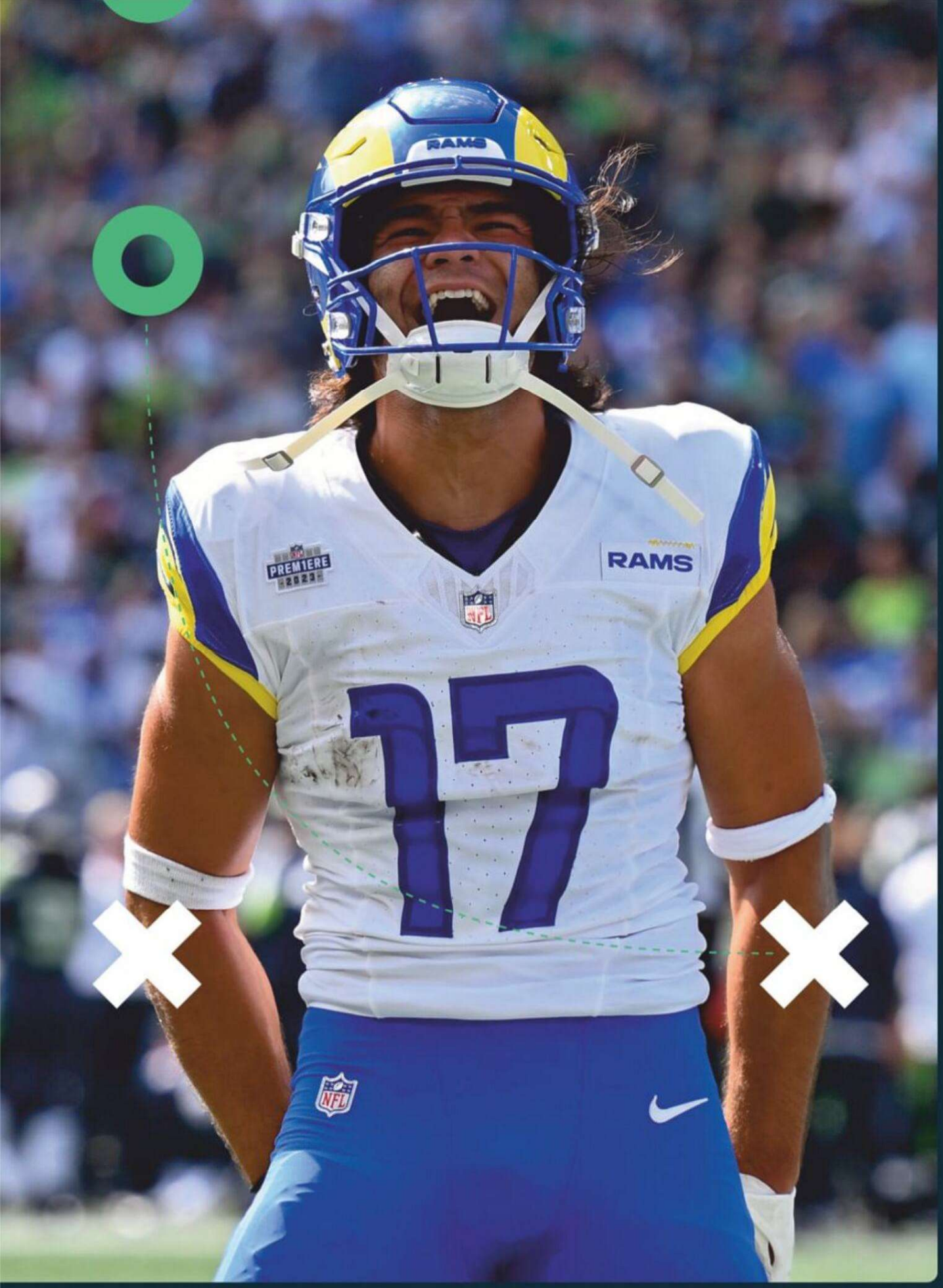
Speaking of the waiver wire, reducing the number of bench spots forces everyone in the league to make tough decisions each week and keeps the waiver wire fresh, with teams constantly churning for immediate production and covering bye weeks. **I**t's no fun when the waiver wire is completely picked over and all the sleepers are stashed on everyone's deep benches.

Implement these two tweaks and watch the action fly.

IAN: Add a last-place punishment if you don't have one already.

Here are some examples, courtesy of the Fantasy **L**ife Punishment Generator:

- × **Y**ou too can be **J**oey **C**hestnut: **E**at one hot dog every inning of a baseball game. Here's to hoping the game doesn't go to extra innings!
- × Binge it: **L**oser must binge-watch a TV show of the winner's choosing and offer a full recap on social media without telling anyone why.
- × **D**ate night: Put your favorite team's jersey on a giant stuffed animal and bring it to Buffalo **W**ild **W**ings, then enjoy the evening!
- × Hail to the winner: Get a poster of the league winner and put it on your bedroom wall for the year.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17

There are countless other possibilities, of course. The point here is that a last-place punishment keeps the entire league involved for the duration of the season, even if the championship dreams of many teams are already dashed by December.

→ What is your biggest piece of advice to fantasy managers?

PETE: Stop playing scared.

So many drafters are more concerned with not looking stupid than they are with actually winning their league. If you play in a competitive league with 11 other solid managers, you have only an 8.3% (1 in 12) chance of winning the league. Let that sink in for a moment: If you play things conservatively, you're expected to win just once every 12 years.

So take risks. Stack up an offense you think is undervalued. Go with the "Zero RB" strategy we detail in this magazine. Send out a bunch of trade offers for star players who start the season slow. Do anything you can to increase your chances. What's the worst thing that happens? You finish in last place, have to live in a Waffle House for 24 hours and end up on Matthew Berry's X feed for living the #fantasylife? Exactly.

IAN: Stay a week ahead on the waiver wire.

You know the only thing cooler than landing the consensus top waiver wire option? Answer: already having them on your bench because you, a scholar, had the foresight to identify the player's upside a week before everyone else.

We can't predict injuries, and some NFL coaches always seem to find a way to disrupt our best-laid plans (looking at you, Arthur Smith). Making sure your bench is filled with high-upside players just an injury away from a big-time role is something you can control. Why roster multiple QBs, TEs or D/STs when you could use that spot on someone like Ty Chandler? If you already have five baller WRs, doesn't it make sense to load up on legit handcuffs instead of fringe WR5 types like Jerry Jeudy?

Even if you're already set at RB, many backups are truly just one injury away from entering the RB2 conversation, making the prospect of already having the popular handcuff option during any given week an enticing opportunity in the trade market — especially when discussing potential deals with the manager who just got their teeth kicked in by the feared injury gods.

DWAIN: Just pick the right players.

I know, that's much easier said than done. So let's amend that statement to something more realistic: Just pick the right types of players. Yes, that's right. In fantasy football, it pays to have a type. For each position, there are traits that we can think of as cheat codes, especially at QB and RB.

^ Don't sit on multiple onesies when you could stash the high-upside likes of Ty Chandler

× Quarterback

We want QBs who can run. Since 2010, 26 QBs have reached 600-plus rushing yards in a season. They averaged 22.1 fantasy points per game, and only two of them finished outside the top 12. Here are candidates to reach 600-plus rushing yards and their best ball ADP:

- × Josh Allen – Round 3
- × Jalen Hurts – Round 4
- × Lamar Jackson – Round 4
- × Anthony Richardson – Round 5
- × Kyler Murray – Round 7
- × Jayden Daniels – Round 9
- × Justin Fields – Round 16

× Running back

We want RBs who earn targets. Since 2011, there have been 25 RBs to eclipse 20 points per game in half PPR. Only seven failed to reach 60-plus targets. Candidates to reach 60-plus targets and their best-ball ADP:

- × Christian McCaffrey – Round 1
- × Breece Hall – Round 1
- × Bijan Robinson – Round 1
- × Jahmyr Gibbs – Round 2
- × De'Von Achane – Round 2
- × Josh Jacobs – Round 3
- × James Cook – Round 5
- × Rachaad White – Round 5

- Aaron Jones – Round 6
- Alvin Kamara – Round 6
- Jaylen Warren – Round 8

→ What is your boldest prediction for 2024?

IAN: Rookie WRs go nuclear.

I'm not just talking about the consensus Big Three. Marvin Harrison Jr., Malik Nabers and, to a lesser extent, Rome Odunze are set up well fantasy-wise ahead of 2024, but it's the other Day 1 and Day 2 options who managed to land on soft depth charts with upside QBs who are especially enticing at cost.

- Brian Thomas Jr. already profiles as the Jaguars' lead outside WR and has a decent chance to be QB Trevor Lawrence's No. 1 target.
- Xavier Worthy has already earned some "D-Jax" (De-Sean Jackson) praise from Chiefs head coach Andy Reid and could be heavily leaned on early, especially if Rashee Rice is suspended.
- Keon Coleman has a legit chance of leading the Bills in targets, which is pretty cool considering his QB is Josh f***ing Allen.
- Ladd McConkey profiles as the Chargers' fairly undisputed No. 1 WR. His targets figure to be plentiful coming from Justin Herbert, even if the offense ultimately runs the ball more than fantasy managers would prefer.

Even guys like Ja'Lynn Polk and Xavier Legette also could realistically lead their offense in targets, while Jermaine Burton, Malachi Corley, Ricky Pearsall and Adonai Mitchell at least profile as early-season starters in offenses led by QBs that fantasy managers generally approve of.

DWAIN: The Falcons become a top three offense.

Atlanta has invested high-end draft capital in offensive skill positions over the past few years:

- Kyle Pitts: 4th overall (2021)
- Drake London: 8th (2022)
- Bijan Robinson: 8th (2023)

Unfortunately, abysmal QB play and bizarre personnel utilization by ex-head coach Arthur Smith sabotaged fantasy production Over the last three seasons, the Falcons averaged 195 yards and 1.1 TDs through the air, the fifth-worst production in the NFL. In that same span, Atlanta's new starting quarterback, Kirk Cousins, averaged the sixth-most yards (271) and TDs (1.9). Atlanta also added QB Michael Penix Jr. with the No. 8 pick in April, completing a massive upgrade to the QB room. Zac Robinson, formerly of the Rams, will take over as offensive coordinator and stabilize the playing time of his star players. Last season, Smith's deployment of his stars was laughable:

- Robinson: under 50% of rushing attempts in 12 of 16 non-injury games. LOL
- London: under 90% route participation in 7 of 15 non-injury games. LMAO
- Pitts: under 80% route participation in 9 of 17 games. ROFL

There's a world in which all three players lead their position in fantasy points in 2024.

PETE: We will get multiple dark horse offenses that surprise everyone.

Last season it was the C.J. Stroud-led Texans.

This year, maybe it's Patriots QB Drake Maye pulling a Justin Herbert and scorching the league after coming into the NFL as a polarizing prospect. Maybe Steelers QB Russell Wilson, separated from a coach who hated him in Denver, gives us some vintage performances and vaults Pittsburgh to the playoffs. Maybe Carolina QB Bryce Young bounces back with a new head coach and an influx of new offensive weaponry? Or maybe Broncos QB Bo Nix morphs into Sean Payton's new Drew Brees and gives Denver its first legit QB since Peyton Manning.

Don't make me pinpoint exactly which offenses are going to shock the world ... just know it's the Year of the Sleeper Team.

It's fantasy freedom for Kyle Pitts (left), Drake London and the Falcons

Impact Rookies & Opportunity

Breaking down whether this year's top rookies are set up for success as soon as 2024

BY DWAIN MCFARLAND

< All signs point to an instant impact for Marvin Harrison Jr.

→ Marvin Harrison Jr. WR, Cardinals

In the Fantasy Life Super Model — driven by the data points that correlate with future NFL production — Harrison posted a 100th-percentile score, topping Ja'Marr Chase for the best mark since 2018.

No other WR in the class was more dominant against man coverage, with a 39% target rate. In other words, when Harrison was on the field and saw man coverage, his QBs decided to get him the rock almost half the time. Only six prospects have reached the 80th percentile or better in the Super Model, and they have fared exceptionally well in their first two years.

- × Top 12 Finishes: 20%
- × Top 24 Finishes: 67%
- × Top 36 Finishes: 83%

Harrison immediately becomes the top dog in the Cardinals' receiving room and will challenge TE Trey McBride to be the team's target leader. Playing with a capable QB in Kyler Murray, Harrison projects as a borderline WR1. In a good runout, Harrison reaches similar heights to Justin Jefferson (WR10) and Ja'Marr Chase (WR5) in their rookie campaigns.

→ Malik Nabers WR, Giants

Nabers owns the third-highest score in the Super Model, sandwiched between Chase and Jaylen Waddle. While he has yet to demonstrate the same ability to dominate the intermediate range of the field as Harrison, Nabers still earned targets at all field levels and was more ex-

plosive after the catch. His 30% target rate against man coverage and 25% rate against zone were both WR1-worthy.

Landing with Daniel Jones, isn't ideal. However, the Giants' receiving corps offers little competition for targets; if you squint, there's a world in which Nabers has more targets than Harrison in their rookie year.

→ Caleb Williams
QB, Bears

The Bears don't have a great track record with QBs, but they appear set on giving Williams the support his predecessors lacked.

- × 2023: Traded for D.J. Moore
- × 2024 Traded for Keenan Allen, signed Gerald Everett and D'Andre Swift, drafted Rome Odunze

Williams has the weapons to challenge for 4,000-plus passing yards and could add another 350 to 450 yards rushing. In college, he accounted for 13% of the designed rushing attempts and 30% of rushing TDs, punching in 27 scores in 37 games. Once you factor in his upside as a rusher, Williams' potential to rank among the top 12 QBs.

→ Rome Odunze
WR, Bears

Odunze grades out as the ninth-best prospect in the Super Model. He broke out later, and his star never burned as bright as Harrison or Nabers, but Odunze still offers WR1 traits. He can win at all three levels of the field playing from the outside, and his target rates against man (30%) and zone (25%) were on par with those of Nabers.

Chicago's pecking order for targets will be challenging. D.J. Moore and Keenan Allen are coming off 26% and 30% target-share seasons. Odunze would immediately lock into the WR3 with WR2 upside status if either of those players went down due to injury. Since 2011, 34 rookies have carved out the No. 3 role in a passing attack, averaging 8.9 points. Odunze has a shot at a WR3 finish despite the target competition.

→ Xavier Worthy
WR, Chiefs

Worthy is best known for his record-setting 4.21 40-yard dash at the combine, but he isn't just a track star. His 29% career target share ranks No. 1 in the 2024 class. Some have concerns about Worthy's size at 165 pounds, but college defenders struggled to disrupt him. Against man coverage, he ranked second behind Harrison with a 32% target rate. Worthy offers the versatility to stretch the defense horizontally with quick-hitting YAC plays, or he can push vertically with his deep speed.

While the Chiefs' WR depth chart is suddenly flush, Worthy still offers WR3 potential. He should see plenty of high-leverage opportunities in an offense led by Patrick Mahomes.

→ Brian Thomas Jr.
WR, Jaguars

With a 40-yard dash time of 4.33 at 6 foot 3, Thomas offers the size-speed combination that NFL teams love. He was never a high-end target earner at LSU, and his coming-out party didn't happen until his final season. However, when QBs did look his way, Thomas rewarded them with a 132.8 QB rating.

At LSU, Thomas used his speed to set up his underneath route tree; he collected 50% of his targets 0 to 9 yards downfield. His long-term outlook is strong, but he must steal targets from Christian Kirk and Evan Engram.

→ Jonathon Brooks
RB, Panthers

As a redshirt sophomore, Brooks secured the No. 20 score in the Super Model since 2018. On a per-team-attempt basis, Brooks was the No. 2 Power 5 RB in the class with a 2.22 adjusted yards per attempt (YPTA), and he registered the third-best receiving grade in the class per PFF.

The Panthers might seem like a lousy landing spot, but we must keep our minds open to improvement. Bryce Young is just 23, and they beefed up their interior O-line. The RB competition isn't substantial — Brooks should win the lead role quickly. The biggest question is how long it will take him to get healthy; Brooks is coming off a late-season ACL injury. Once his opportunity comes, Brooks could pay off in a colossal way. RBs that have scored in the same range as Brooks in the Super Model have enjoyed success rate in their first two years.

- × Top 12 Finishes: 48%
- × Top 24 Finishes: 71%
- × Top 36 Finishes: 90%

Brooks would rank among my top 18 RBs if fully healthy.

Rookie Sleepers for 2024

Nine rookies who could emerge as key fantasy contributors in 2024

BY DWAIN MCFARLAND AND JONATHAN FULLER

→ Jayden Daniels QB, Commanders

Running quarterbacks used to be more of a cheat code in fantasy football because they were perpetually undervalued.

That really isn't the case these days, but I think all the hype around No. 1 pick Caleb Williams has caused No. 2 pick Jayden Daniels' fantasy upside to fly a bit under the radar.

The Commanders might not have been the most desirable landing spot, but Daniels does have weapons to work with, and he plays the perfect style for accumulating fantasy points. He's a dynamic runner who is willing to throw the ball deep — exactly what we want in a fantasy QB.

During his 2023 Heisman Trophy-winning season, Daniels had the following ranks among Division I QBs:

- 2 deep passing TDs (20+ air yards): 1st
- 99.2 PFF Passing Grade on deep attempts: 1st
- 1,250 rushing yards (excluding sacks): 1st
- 1,347 passing yards on deep attempts: 4th

Despite racking up more than 2,300 rushing yards and 21 rushing TDs during his two seasons at LSU, Daniels isn't really talked about in the same way other elite rushing QB prospects such as Lamar Jackson and Kyler Murray were.

The Commanders also traded away a bunch of their key defensive pieces last year. They could be really bad on that side of the ball, which would lead to

plenty of trailing game scripts for the offense. Playing from behind will mean more drop-backs, which in turn means more scrambles and deep pass attempts.

Daniels should be the starter from Day 1. As long as he can stay healthy, he has a good chance to be a top 12 QB on a weekly basis. Don't be surprised if Daniels is the highest-scoring rookie QB this season.

— JONATHAN FULLER

→ Bucky Irving
RB, Buccaneers

We're getting into deep sleeper territory here, so depending on your league size, Irving may not necessarily be a draft target. But he's definitely someone to keep an eye on throughout the season.

Irving was ultra-productive in college at Minnesota and Oregon but fell to the fourth round of the draft due to poor athletic testing numbers. Despite that, he still landed in a great spot with minimal competition in the Tampa Bay backfield. Rachaad White is locked in as the starter, but Irving should easily win the No. 2 job and could earn a role right away as the Bucs look to lighten White's workload from last season.

One of the most productive college backs over the last two seasons, Irving racked up 2,238 rushing yards and 712 receiving yards. In 2023, his 6.3 yards-per-carry average ranked in the top 20 nationally, and his 56 receptions were the most among RBs. Despite being a bit undersized, Irving rarely missed time while amassing 429 touches over his final two college seasons.

Although Rachaad White has been valuable for fantasy football purposes since joining the NFL, he has been one of the least efficient rushers in the league. He has ranked 46th and 52nd, respectively, in yards per carry among qualifying RBs over the last two seasons, and the eye test backs up the fact that he's a better receiving back than rusher.

Irving may not be the most explosive player, but he's very reliable and could easily be a more effective rusher than White. Look for him to emerge over the course of the season, and be ready to grab him off waivers a week ahead of your league mates.

— JONATHAN FULLER

→ MarShawn Lloyd
RB, Packers

One of my favorite prospects in a relatively weak RB class, Lloyd is an explosive rusher who can make defenders miss, create yards after contact and contribute in the passing game. He earned pretty solid draft capital (88th overall) and landed with one of the league's most exciting young offenses in Green Bay.

Lloyd never received a huge workload in college with just 289 career carries, but at 220 pounds, he has the size to handle more volume if needed. He likely won't get that opportunity right away; the Packers gave ex-Raider Josh Jacobs a sizeable contract to be their lead back.

But I expect Lloyd to slot in as the No. 2 back ahead of AJ Dillon, who was ineffective last season. The rookie will be a much more dynamic change-of-pace back who will bring more juice when he's on the field and also create plays in space, an area where Dillon leaves a lot to be desired.

< MarShawn Lloyd brings serious big-play ability to Green Bay

During the 2023 season, Lloyd flashed in a few key areas. He led all RBs with 17.8 yards per reception, ranked fifth nationally in elusive rating (177.0) and was 26th in yards after contact per attempt (3.97). All of these stats point to his ability to create yards for himself, a valuable skill for both fantasy and real football.

The Packers have always been committed to using multiple backs, so Lloyd should have standalone value. But his real upside comes if Jacobs misses time. He is one of my favorite late-round picks to stash on my bench so I can see how he looks through the first few weeks. If he flashes the ability I believe he has, I'll view him as a premier handcuff for the rest of the season.

— JONATHAN FULLER

→ Trey Benson
RB, Cardinals

Benson checks the boxes that NFL teams love. He registered the No. 1 Speed Score in the draft class thanks to his 4.39 40-yard dash at 216 pounds and was difficult to bring down on the field. No other back in the class forced more missed tackles per attempt (0.39), and he ranked fifth in average yards after contact (3.97).

The third-round pick immediately projects as the No. 2 option behind James Conner in Arizona. If he has a strong camp, he could carve out a role as Conner's change-of-pace

counterpart on early downs. Either way, given Conner's propensity to miss games, Benson could get his chance to shine as the lead back at some point this year.

The Florida State product profiles as one of the more fun RB4 handcuff options this preseason, but could deliver RB2 value if Conner misses time.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Ladd McConkey
WR, Chargers

McConkey wasn't a highly lauded recruit, and it took him time before he made his mark at Georgia. But he made a difference in a tough conference when he got opportunities, posting the third-highest targeted QB rating in the class.

While some may think of McConkey as more of an underneath slot weapon, he played outside most snaps (69%) and demonstrated an ability to attack every field depth. Per PFF data, he was above average against man coverage (23% target rate) and lethal against zone (25%).

Under Jim Harbaugh, the Chargers will be a run-oriented offense, but there's little target competition. Joshua Palmer is strictly a WR3, Quentin Johnston was dreadful as a rookie and D.J. Chark has had plenty of chances to break out before now. While we can't expect 125-plus targets from McConkey in Year 1, seeing him lead the team and eclipse 100 wouldn't be surprising. Given that he pairs with a good young QB in Justin Herbert, we could see McConkey broach WR3 territory early in the season.

Since 2018, 41% of prospects who graded in McConkey's range of the Super Model posted a top 36 finish by Year 2, while 27% found their way into the top 24.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Keon Coleman
WR, Bills

Coleman slipped down NFL draft boards after running a mediocre 4.61 40-yard dash at the combine. But Buffalo didn't let him last long after Day 1, scooping up the receiver with the first pick in the second round.

The 6-foot-3 WR never became an elite target earner at the level of Marvin Harrison Jr., Malik Nabers and Rome Odunze, but he still posted strong marks, with a 25% target rate against man coverage and 23% versus zone.

Scouts have concerns about his ability to separate against NFL defensive backs, and his adjusted contested-target rate echoed those concerns at six percentage points over expected.

He was primarily targeted short (38%) and deep (27%), which is concerning considering his archetype as a non-burner, chain-moving prospect. Only 21% of his targets came in the intermediate range (10 to 19 yards).

To unlock his potential in the NFL, he must improve in that aspect of his game to take advantage of soft zone defenses trying to take away deep shots.

If he fails to improve, he could be a bust because he doesn't possess elite deep speed and doesn't have the quickness to win with just a diet of underneath targets.

While Coleman carries bust potential, if things click for him playing with an elite QB1 in Buffalo, the upside is there. I like him as a boom-or-bust WR4 option this season.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

v Ladd McConkey could very well lead the Chargers in targets as a rookie

→ Roman Wilson
WR, Steelers

The Pittsburgh Steelers have a tremendous track record of finding stud receivers in the middle rounds of the NFL Draft, and I think they may have done it again with Wilson. His college production won't blow you away, but he was very efficient on a per-route basis (2.1 YPRR or better in each of his final three seasons) and was the leading receiver for Michigan's national championship team.

He profiles as a slot receiver in the NFL, but don't let that fool you — Wilson is a dynamic athlete (4.39-second 40 yard dash) capable of creating explosive plays.

What Wilson does well should mesh perfectly with the Steelers offense. I'm expecting new OC Arthur Smith to lean on the run game and throw off of play-action a lot, which should help

^ Ja'Lynn Polk has an opportunity to become an instant go-to option for the Patriots

get the most out of their new QBs. Wilson will thrive running crossing routes and deep posts, where he can use his speed to separate from defenders. He has strong hands and isn't afraid of contact, which should make him a reliable target over the middle.

With Diontae Johnson now in Carolina, the only proven pass-catcher in Pittsburgh is George Pickens, and he isn't the type of receiver who will soak up all the targets.

I think there's a good chance Wilson can step in and be the second target in the offense for most of the season.

— JONATHAN FULLER

→ Ja'Lynn Polk WR, Patriots

After going to New England at pick 5 in the second round, Polk is one of my biggest post-draft climbers — up 12 spots in the rookie rankings. Polk demonstrated an ability to attack all layers of the field for the Huskies, but he was particularly good at unlocking deep and intermediate shots down the field. Below is his target profile and how it compares to the NCAA average for a WR.

- × Behind the line of scrimmage: 14% (+0 percentage points)
- × 0 to 9 yards: 29% (-10)
- × 10 to 19 yards: 32% (+4)
- × 20-plus yards: 25% (+5)

He didn't post dominant target rates against man or zone coverage, but target competition was fierce at Washington with Odunze and Jalen McMillan (a third-round pick of the Bucs) on the roster.

That could be a very different story in New England, where Polk will compete within one of the softest depth charts in the NFL. With Drake Maye on board as the new QB1 in New England, Polk could surprise in 2024. He comes off the board almost 40 picks after guys like McConkey and Coleman, who were also early Round 2 picks.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

→ Jermaine Burton WR, Bengals

Burton stood out as one of the most underrated receivers in the Rookie Super Model, ranking in the same tier of WRs that went earlier than him in the NFL Draft. His closest data comps in the model were George Pickens and Nico Collins.

He demonstrated that he could stretch the field, with 28% of his targets coming 20-plus yards downfield. However, his ability to earn targets in the intermediate range of the field was even more impressive. No other WR in the class earned more of their targets than Burton (40%) between 10 and 19 yards downfield.

Burton could be the perfect option to take over the slot role in Cincinnati, giving Joe Burrow a vertical slot option who could add a new dimension to the attack.

Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins are the clear-cut top two options, capping Burton's upside to WR3 territory. But if either Chase or Higgins misses time, we could get WR2 spike production out of the rookie.

— DWAIN MCFARLAND

How To Use Fantasy Life To Manage Your Team

From ranks to projections to tools, we have everything a fantasy manager could need

BY SAM WALLACE

Anyone can draft a fantasy football team. What separates those who merely draft a team from those who consistently win championships is how well you manage your roster during the season. Fantasy Life has the best tools and resources to help you do just that. The best part? It's affordable to the masses. With a combination of free content and premium upgrade opportunities (see the back cover for more info), Fantasy Life has you covered.

→ 1. Rankings

Who doesn't love good old-fashioned rankings? Sometimes the easiest place to begin building your vision for your fantasy football roster starts with a simple list from some of the most accurate, consistent rankers in the industry.

The Fantasy Life rankings are updated in real time and react to breaking news, trades and other meaningful reports. Easily sort the rankings by your favorite Fantasy Life ranker, by individual positions or, my personal favorite, the Flex function. This combines all offensive positions into a single list, which can help you figure out how to value different positions against each other — such as RBs, WRs and TEs.

→ 3. Start/Sit

Projections are handy, but sometimes you just want a quick visual of which players to start. Don't worry, we've got you covered. Our powerful, intuitive Start/Sit tool is here to help.

Simply select your league scoring format, input up to four players and immediately receive an easy-to-read chart that tells you everything you need to know. Looking for the player projected to score the most points? The point projection is listed first. Curious to see who is projected to receive more rushing attempts, targets or attempt more passes? You can easily compare players across different positions to help answer those tricky flex or superflex lineup decisions.

→ 2. Projections

Congratulations, you've officially drafted your team and are now getting ready for Week 1. Instead of using your league platform's projections, use Fantasy Life's NFL Weekly Projections tool to give you the edge you need.

Here's how it works:

"Our in-season projection model is built on historical data that focuses on expected game environment and team archetypes. For example, our model understands how a slow-paced, run-heavy team behaves differently than a fast-paced, pass-heavy team in leading, close, trailing and blowout game scripts."

How cool is that? Our in-house suite of tools and resources is designed to empower you, the fantasy manager, to make the best decisions possible for your weekly lineups.

→ 4. Defense vs. Position (DvP)

Let's dive a little deeper. **W**hile the Start/Sit tool makes it easy to highlight specific projected stats, the Defense vs. **P**osition **(**Dv**P)** tool shows how each team defense performs against opposing offensive positions.

Curious to see how an NFL team matches up against opposing RBs? **W**hat about their secondary and how well they limit **W**R production? The Dv**P** tool allows you to see if your players are heading into a favorable or unfavorable matchup. This updates each week so you can see how teams are progressing throughout the season.

→ 5. Utilization Report

Prepare yourself, because this next tool is arguably the best thing ever created. Dwain **M**cFarland's Utilization Report is one of the most widely read pieces in the industry each and every year.

Here's how it works:

"This report will help you understand which players are due more or less according to their roles. Based on historical data tied to metrics we know drive volume, it is a great way to understand who is overperforming (sell high) and underperforming (buy low)."

Buy low. Sell high. Two great American pastimes in fantasy football.

The weekly article highlights data from the corresponding tool. The Game Log feature helps you understand how often a player is on the field, what type of rush or target share they are getting and how many air yards they're seeing, just to name a few valuable metrics. **M**uch like the Start/Sit tool, you can input up to four players to see how their stats compare.

It's revolutionary, easy-to-use and, best of all, it's free.

→ 6. Waiver Hub

You've survived the opening weeks of the season and your team is already off to a great start. **(**Of course it is — you're using Fantasy Life's powerful set of data-driven tools to beat your opponents.**)**

Now, one of the most critical elements of in-season management is upon you: waivers.

If you are unfamiliar, waivers is the process by which you add players to your roster who are currently not on a roster. Different leagues have different policies for how waivers are handled, but let's assume you use the FAAB system **(**Free Agent Acquisition Budget**)**.

Fantasy Life has a **W**aiver **W**ire article and **W**aiver **H**ub that updates each week. In these, we let you know who we are targeting as waiver additions, the order we'd prioritize them and how much of our waiver budget we'd spend. Knowing that each league is unique, this helps give you a general sense of how to attack those un-rostered players.

→ 7. Fantasy Life 2024

If you are looking for a tool to meet a specific need, Fantasy Life has you covered. And these tools are the most powerful when used in conjunction with one another.

For example: You're looking to make a tough start/sit decision and stuck between a **W**R and a RB. **W**hile you could simply use the Start/Sit tool, give this a try:

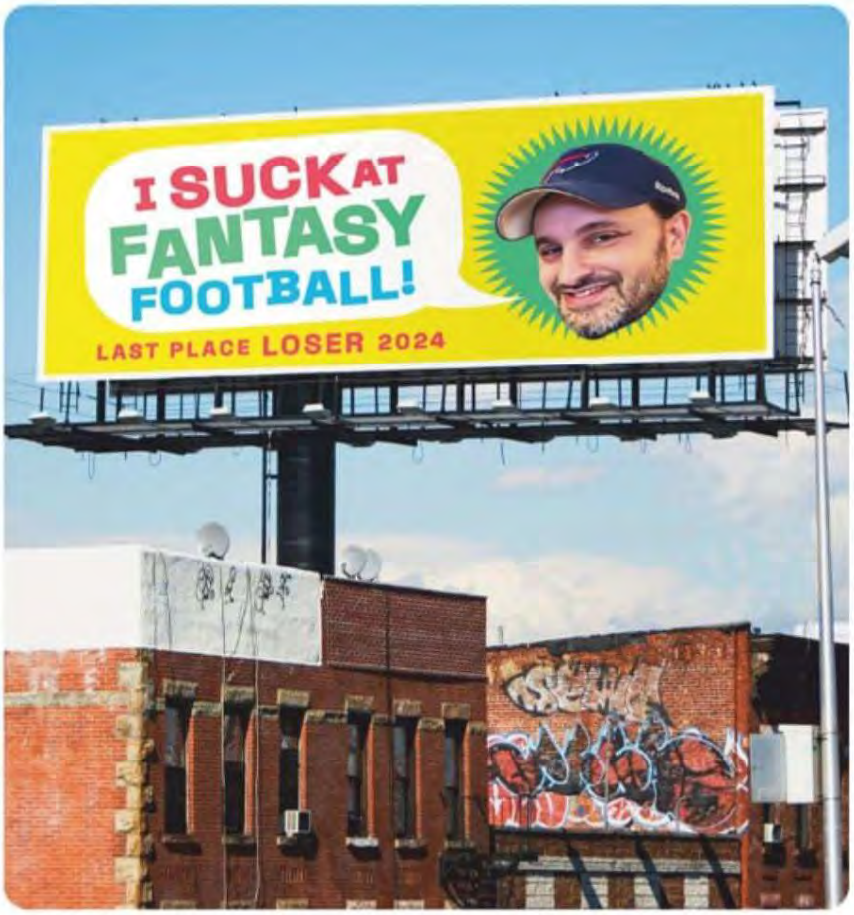
First, look at both the weekly rankings and projections. Get a sense of what the Fantasy Life analysts think of those players given the unique scoring format of your league. Next, check out of the Dv**P** tool and see how the opposing defenses match up against either **W**Rs or RBs. Is one much stronger or weaker than the other? Finally, head over to the Utilization Report and see how each player's usage has been trending. Is the **W**R earning snaps, targets and air yards? Is the RB staying on the field inside the 5-yard line or during the two-minute drill?

These resources can help you manage your fantasy football team week in and week out. The results speak for themselves. Give them a try and watch your expertise grow this fantasy season.

Fantasy Life Punishment Generator

Our free tool can help "inspire" your leaguemates to try a little harder to not suck

BY KENDALL VALENZUELA AND COOTERDOODLE



V This could be you if you don't utilize Fantasy Life's vast resources

Since the beginning of time, there have been fantasy football punishments. ... All right, maybe they don't go back that far, but it sounds good for this exercise.

Fantasy football is all about the thrill. We do meticulous research, draft a team and experience the whole gamut of emotions for 17 weeks, all to be the last person standing in our leagues. We do it for the glory, and while we all love to win, the other side — beating our leaguemates — is just as satisfying.

That's where Fantasy Life's Punishment Generator comes in.

First, it makes sense to go through what the generator does. The Fantasy Life Punishment Generator makes it fun and easy to create a unique punishment for your league's last-place finisher. Of course, we realize some leagues already have long-standing and often personalized punishments in place, but there are plenty of new and existing leagues that might need help getting creative. That's what we're here for!

You can curate the exact punishment for your league by picking different "settings" like food, physical activity, public shame and private shame, then you get to pick the intensity. So without further ado, here is a taste of what you can get from the punishment generator.

→ Billboard of Shame

We need to preface this one by saying it costs a lot of money! Some people will use a portion of their league dues to complete this punishment, while others will make the loser pay for it.

But if you're able to get that straightened out, then this is the perfect public shame punishment. Imagine driving down the

road on the way to dinner with your friends and there's your leaguemate's face plastered on a huge billboard with a note detailing just how bad they are at fantasy football. The photos would be priceless and the shame would last forever: "Hey, aren't you the terrible fantasy football player I saw on a billboard outside of town?"

That would just be epic. Here are some ideas for the billboard:

- I suck at Fantasy Football — Last place LOSER 2024
- (Insert name) needs fantasy football advice

→ Happy Halloween

This one is unconventional, but could be the most embarrassing yet. The loser must dress up in a costume of the league's choosing and go door to door trick-or-treating until they get at least 10 pieces of candy. The catch: It cannot be in October.

Imagine the videos — the moment your friend embarrassingly knocks on their door asking for candy in the middle of April. The pure shock from people answering their door to that mess will be unforgettable. And remember, it's not just one residence — there must be at least 10 pieces of candy in the bucket for the punishment to end. (And, no, it doesn't count if a homeowner gives the fantasy loser 10 pieces.)

We're all for safety, so be sure someone accompanies your friend when going door to door!

→ All Aboard

We recommend the loser take a good book for this next one. In this punishment, the loser must take a day-long, nonstop train or bus ride to and from the league's destination of choice.

Of course, there's a twist! The loser doesn't get to bring any electronic devices; no phones, tablets, computers, etc. All they get is a disposable camera to take a minimum of 10 photos to show their leaguemates after the trip is complete. It's just you, the open road and your deepest thoughts about fantasy football. Bon voyage, loser!

→ Open Mic Night

What brings a league closer together than watching its loser fumble his or her way through public humiliation? Shame: It's what all the best punishments are grounded in. For this, the loser must sign up for a comedy club open mic night. They're likely bitter from their loss and going to hate this. And if you're lucky, so will the audience.

The kicker: The loser can't leave the stage until their time is up. They can fill the air with whatever song and dance they'd like, but when the boos start rolling in or the crickets take over, THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

→ Talking 'Bout the Car Wash, Yeah!

Just because someone needs to be punished doesn't mean the rest of the league can't benefit, right? For this one, all you're going to need is some soap, water and time. Nice weather is optional. Whether you want to have a day-long car-wash party with the entire league in attendance or personalized wash dates, your whip is going to look brand new driving around town. Hey loser,you missed a spot ...

→ Combine Time

Unlike the other punishments, this one requires very little: just blood, sweat and tears. For this challenge, the loser must complete every aspect of the NFL combine (and record it):

- 40-yard dash
- Bench press
- Vertical jump
- Broad jump
- Three-cone drill
- Physical measurements

You didn't think this would be purely a physical punishment, did you? Shame comes in all forms! We aren't skipping out on mental agility:

- Wonderlic Test

→ Who Wants Lemonade?

When life throws you lemons, you better be prepared for punishment. For this one, not only will the loser need to host a lemonade stand, but there's a conditional sales requirement: They cannot close down until they've made at least $10.

Look, kids do it all the time. We can't imagine why a grownup's lemonade stand wouldn't be the talk of the town. Hope your neighbors are thirsty.

FANTASY LIFE

Fantasy Football 2024

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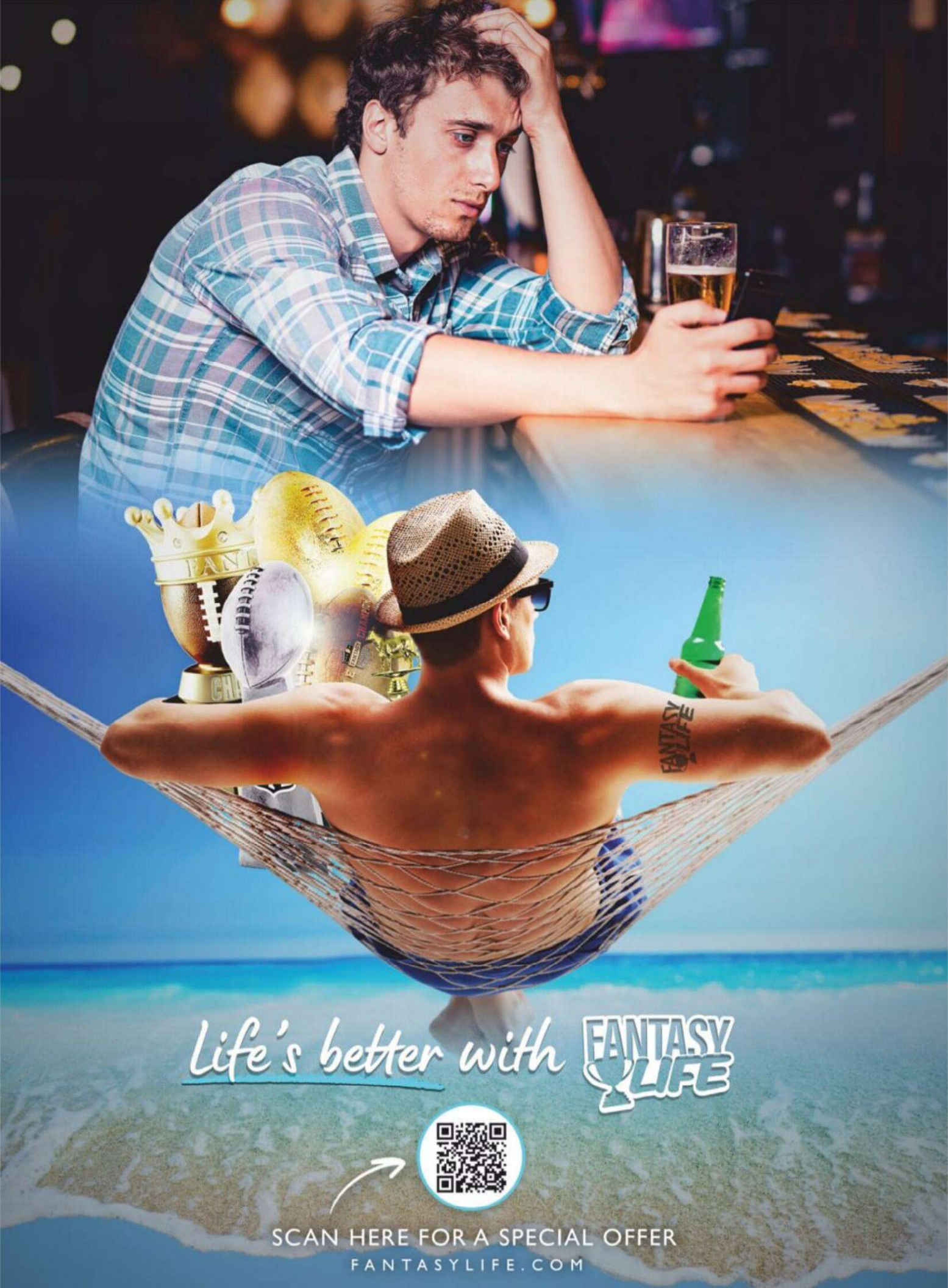
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